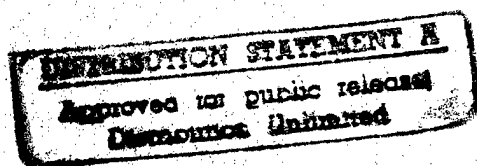


DOMESTIC INTERNAL SECURITY AND DEMOCRACY: THE BRITISH ARMY  
IN NORTHERN IRELAND FROM 1969 TO 1974

Eric M Peterson



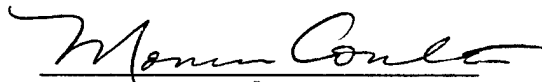
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## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: A History of Northern Ireland.....	6
A. The Beginnings.....	8
B. Plantations.....	10
C. James II - The Last Catholic King.....	13
D. Penal Laws.....	14
E. Rebellion and Famine.....	15
F. Home Rule.....	19
G. The Easter Rising.....	22
H. Partition.....	24
I. Civil Rights.....	28
J. Summary.....	29
Chapter 2: The Threat.....	31
A. The Ulster Volunteer Force.....	32
B. The Ulster Defense Association.....	37
C. The Irish Republican Army.....	44
D. The Official Irish Republican Army.....	50
E. The Provisional Irish Republican Army.....	51
F. Summary.....	56
Chapter 3: The Call for Deployment.....	58
A. The Political Environment.....	59
B. The British Troops Arrive.....	64

C. The Soldier.....	67
D. The "No-Go" Areas.....	69
E. Law and the Military.....	71
F. Equipment.....	74
G. Summary.....	79
Chapter 4: The British Military Strategy.....	81
A. Riot Control.....	82
B. Patrolling.....	84
C. Ulster Defense Regiment.....	87
D. Lower Falls Curfew.....	90
E. Internment.....	91
F. Interrogation in Depth.....	94
G. Training.....	96
H. Bloody Sunday.....	99
I. Operation Motorman.....	102
J. Intelligence.....	104
K. Press Relations.....	107
L. The Situation in 1974.....	109
M. Summary.....	110
Conclusions.....	113
Appendix 1 - Map of Ireland and Northern Ireland.....	119
Appendix 2 - Map of Belfast and Londonderry.....	121
List of References.....	122
Vita	

## INTRODUCTION

Peacekeeping operations, defined by the United States Department of Defense as "Efforts taken with the consent of the civil or military authorities of the belligerent parties to a conflict to maintain a negotiated truce in support of diplomatic efforts to achieve and maintain peace" (JCS Pub 3-07, 1990, p. xix), are an everyday part of the political landscape. The United States, Great Britain, France and many other countries have soldiers acting in this role worldwide. Global peacekeeping operations in unstable regions such as Cyprus or the Sinai are an integral part of maintaining stability and (ideally) avoiding further conflict. However, an equally important issue for all democracies, new and old, is that of domestic peacekeeping (internal security) within a country's own borders.

The British military strategy in Northern Ireland from 1969-1974 is the focus of this thesis. How did British military strategy "in aid to civil authority" evolve to meet internal security mission requirements while filling the unconventional role of peacekeeper within the United Kingdom? The answer to this question is important for two reasons. First, all democracies may face an internal crisis that could potentially call for the use of national armed forces to aid in restoring and/or maintaining order. The

British experience in Northern Ireland offers potentially valuable lessons concerning the consequences of utilizing regular army units in domestic peacekeeping operations. Second, while the military can be effective in suppressing disorder and reducing conflict, it alone cannot solve a society's longstanding social, economic or political problems. As such, domestic employment of the military should be undertaken in conjunction with other civil agencies to resolve internal conflict. The military's ability to act, as legally mandated or sanctioned in the form of special powers, must be absolutely clear to soldiers and civilians alike.

The period from 1969 to 1974 in the history of Anglo-Irish relations is particularly noteworthy for several reasons. The 1920 Government of Ireland Act established the separate dominions of the Irish Free State (the southern two-thirds of Ireland) and Northern Ireland (the six northeastern counties of Ulster). After the Second World War, the Free State became the independent Republic of Ireland (Eire), but Northern Ireland remained part of the United Kingdom. Home Rule gave Northern Ireland autonomy on many "domestic" issues, and the Protestant majority dominated the Northern Irish Parliament known as Stormont. Consequently, many of Stormont's statutes and policies

between 1921-1969 discriminated against the Catholic minority and this discrimination was reinforced at the municipal level. In the 1960s, growing opposition to religious discrimination led to the formation of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) and to a renewal of the sectarian violence that had preceded partition.

By deploying home-based troops to Northern Ireland in 1969, Britain conceded the fact that the Home Rule civil authorities (the police and the Stormont government) were incapable of maintaining domestic order. Ulster stood at the brink of civil war. This "temporary" or "emergency" deployment led to a buildup and eventually permanent (to this day at least) deployment of thousands of British soldiers within Northern Ireland. What must be stressed here is the fact that British soldiers were deployed not in some far-off former colony, but within a part of the United Kingdom itself.

The beginning of 1974 witnessed much optimism concerning the possible cessation of sectarian hostilities through political cooperation (via the creation of a Council of Ireland). This "peace," it was hoped, would lead to British troop withdrawal and a return to Home Rule. The Council of Ireland, consisting of representatives from Eire



and Northern Ireland, was an attempt by Westminster to effect a degree of power sharing between the two Irelands, and, by extension, between Protestants and Catholics within Ulster. The Council consisted of a fourteen-member ministry and a Consultative Assembly elected by proportional representation. A product of the 1973 Sunningdale conference, this venture at collective governance brought to light the deep-seated fear and mistrust that the Ulster Unionists felt regarding any attempt at giving Eire a voice in Northern Irish affairs. They (Ulster Unionists) viewed this attempt at power sharing as an attack on their sovereignty and argued that Eire had no right to involvement in the internal affairs of a part of the United Kingdom. The Council of Ireland ceased to be viewed as viable. Political solutions to the myriad of problems between Northern Ireland's two sectarian communities have since been proposed, rejected and re-proposed. The prospect of British troop withdrawal and a return to complete civil authority is, however, no closer today than it was in 1974.

A brief history of Northern Ireland, leading up to the events beginning in 1969, is vital to understanding why the current "troubles" continue. Equally as important is an understanding of the complex situation faced by the British army in Northern Ireland. While Catholic/Nationalist

paramilitaries are most commonly associated in the international press with terrorist activity, Protestant/Unionist paramilitary organizations are in fact equally active and equally deadly. Acknowledging both threats when discussing military strategy is essential; a maxim in military art is to "know your enemy."

The initial deployment of home-based active duty soldiers within Northern Ireland began in August 1969. What was the political situation at that time? How did the local communities initially receive the soldiers? What equipment was available to the British military for use in the internal security operations? The answers to these questions lead to British military strategy focusing on the impact of political decisions that affected the army's operational capabilities. In addition, an investigation into the army's evolution from an external aggressor to domestic peacekeeper reveals ongoing difficulties. The successes and failures of British internal security operations in meeting mission requirements requires examination. Finally, consideration must be given to the important lessons that all democracies, present and future, could learn from this British domestic "peacekeeping" experience.

## Chapter One

### A History of Northern Ireland

Understanding the history of Northern Ireland is essential to comprehending the social, economic, and political situation encountered there by the British army in 1969. As the history of Northern Ireland is intertwined with the history of the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain, I cannot discuss one without the others. The intent of this chapter is twofold. First, I will give a brief description of Northern Ireland in very general terms, followed by a review of Irish history highlighting some key events that set the stage for the current troubles (which began in 1969, but whose origins go back hundreds of years).

#### Northern Ireland

Historically, Ireland is divided into the four provinces of Ulster, Munster, Leinster, and Connaught. Travel among the provinces was often difficult due to the abundant bogs, hills, and rivers that dot the Irish landscape. As a result, the people of Ireland developed traits and customs distinctive to their respective regions. Conversely, proximity and relative ease of movement by ship between Ulster and Scotland, separated by only a dozen miles at their closest point (Wilson, 1989, p. 7), forged many common ties throughout the centuries.

In geographic terms, present day Northern Ireland, which covers approximately 5276 square miles, is not much larger than the state of Connecticut (Hachey, Hernon & McCaffrey, 1996, p. 230). It encompasses the counties of Londonderry, Antrim, Down, Armagh, Fermanagh, and Tyrone, six of historic Ulster's original nine counties. The population is split between Protestants, who make up roughly two-thirds of the population, and Catholics, who make up the remaining one-third.

Political parties are essentially drawn along religious lines, with Protestants belonging primarily to Loyalist or Unionist parties and Catholics belonging to Nationalist or Republican parties. For the sake of simplicity, "Unionists" or "Loyalists" are people (predominantly Protestant) within Ulster who wish to remain part of the United Kingdom (UK), and "Nationalists" or "Republicans" are people (predominately Catholic) in Ulster who want to unite with the Republic of Ireland (Eire). The common denominators of the working-class Protestants and Catholics are their level of unemployment, which is the highest in the UK, and their deep-seated mistrust of each other's intentions. To gain a better understanding of how this mutual suspicion and hatred evolved, it is necessary to examine the past.

### The Beginnings

Christianity, the bedrock of Irish nationalism, was introduced to Ireland by St. Patrick in 432 AD. The establishment of monasteries soon followed. This resulted in Irish conversion to and acceptance of Christian norms, first Celtic and then, after the seventh century, Roman. Britain's first claim to Ireland was announced in the twelfth century when England's King Henry II declared his title as lord of Ireland (Finnegan, 1983, p. 9) under the authority of a papal bull sanctioned by Pope Adrian IV. The bull was a religious, legal justification for the English invasion of Ireland. Henry consolidated his power by parceling out land to loyal barons and provincial Irish rulers who agreed to pay him tribute. Anglo-Norman influence was greatest in the East and South of Ireland, especially in the area around Dublin called "the Pale of settlement." Ulster remained almost completely Gaelic, where Norman settlement was peripheral and lasted for only a very short period of time (Wilson, 1989, p. 8).

Over the next few centuries, English interest in Ireland waned, and most Anglo-Normans assimilated into the Irish way of life despite attempts within the Norman aristocracy to maintain their "Englishness." Power-sharing arrangements between the Normans and provincial Irish kings

were developed and continued well into the sixteenth century. Anglo-Norman settlers, or the "Old English," developed their own unique culture which often had more in common with the Irish than that of their fellow Britons. It wasn't until the rule of Henry VII (1485-1509) that British control of Ireland was reasserted. Tudor intentions in Ireland were clear with the passing of Poynings' Law (1494). The law stated no Irish Parliament could meet, nor any legislation be approved, without prior consent of the English monarch.

In the 1530s, the Protestant Reformation made its way to Great Britain, but "reform" was never completed in Ireland. Henry VIII (1509-1547) forced the Parliament to appoint him "supreme head" of the church of England, effectively substituting his authority for that of the pope. Most of the recent British settlers in Ireland, known as the "New English," followed their king and converted to Protestantism. A majority of the "Old English" and Gaelic Irish refused to accept the tenets of the Church of England and chose to remain Catholic.

Henry's reign was certainly pivotal in Irish history, but it was by his daughter, Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603), that English rule was made effective throughout Ireland (Dewar, 1985, p. 12). Vigorous attempts by Elizabeth to

impose the Anglican church practice in Ireland deepened the cultural and political gap between the Irish and the English. As Finnegan states:

"The difference between ruler and ruled (except in Gaelic areas) was now defined not only by property and by culture but also by religion. The Catholicism of Ireland became the hub of Irish identity and later one of the pillars of Irish nationalism" (1983, p. 10).

Ireland experienced an assortment of anti-English "rebellions" throughout the sixteenth century, but they all ended in failure. The last realistic challenge to English rule in Ireland occurred in the 1590s under the leadership of the Ulster Earls of Tyrone (Hugh O'Neill) and Tyrconnell (Hugh O'Donnell). The pair successfully fought off the English for almost nine years before O'Neill finally succumbed in 1603. A few years after his surrender, O'Neill and about one hundred other Irish chieftains fled Ireland altogether. This "flight of the northern earls" opened the door for the final English conquest of Ulster (Finnegan, 1983, p. 10).

#### Plantations

A majority of the land in Ulster became "vacant" after the earls hastened their way to the European continent. This marked the beginning of the "planting" there of a number of British settlers. These plantations, established under the reign of James I (1603-1625), were uniformly

undertaken by Protestants, either Anglican or Presbyterian. Scottish Presbyterians, who came in large numbers, would play the key important role in Ulster's subsequent history. "As Ulster Scots, they helped shape a distinctive Ulster regionalism different from the rest of Ireland" (Hachey, 1996, p. 19). Although there were earlier plantations in Ireland, none were as far reaching or had the same magnitude. The new settlers represented all classes of society, from tenant farmers to landlords. The largest landlords were called "undertakers" (Coogan, 1995, p. 5) and it was forbidden for them to have Irish Catholic tenants. In addition to new farms, plantation settlers also built and established new towns and communities.

The considerable size and religious identity of this immigration wave made it unique when compared to the earlier Tudor plantations of Lenster and Munster. Sheer numbers made any subsequent expulsion of the immigrants by force unlikely (Wilson, 1989, p. 13), and their absorption or assimilation difficult due to religious differences. Clashes between the "native" Catholic population and Protestant settlers ensued, thus sowing the seeds of the sectarian bitterness that exist to this day (Downey, 1983, p. 23).

In the first half of the seventeenth century, Irish



Catholics suffered from discrimination and severe deprivation, especially in Ulster where Protestants were becoming firmly entrenched. In 1641, animosities in Ulster reached a breaking point. Protestant homes were looted and towns burned to the ground. The total number of those who died or were injured as a result of the rebellion will never be known, but it was probably in the thousands. Accounts of Catholic brutality are to this day deeply embedded in the Ulster Protestant community's collective memory, contributing to their present feelings of insecurity.

Payback for the Catholics came in the form of English General Oliver Cromwell, who between August 1649 and May 1650 turned parts of Ireland into a "Catholic killing field." Cromwell's massacre of the garrison at Drogheda became for Irish Catholics what the massacres of 1641 were for Irish Protestants. Under the Act of Settlement (1651), Cromwell's victory was complete and total. Virtually the entire "Old Irish" population had its land confiscated and was forced to move to the barren lands of Connacht in western Ireland. In addition, Cromwell extended plantation to more of Ireland, granting land to his soldiers and to those who had aided his military endeavors during the English Civil War (Wilson, 1989, p. 14).

### James II - The last Catholic King

It was not until the reign of James II, crowned King of England in 1685, that Irish Catholics again challenged English rule. Despite James's Catholicism, Protestant England appeared willing to "accept" him as its king because he would eventually be succeeded by his (Protestant) daughter Mary. It was only after James's second wife gave birth to a (Catholic) son, who now became heir to the throne, that the British Parliament felt compelled to act. Fearing a continuous Catholic monarchy, members forced James to abdicate the throne in a coup d'etat known as the "Glorious Revolution" (1688). The British Parliament invited James's daughter Mary and her husband, William of Orange, to rule as "joint sovereigns" of England.

James committed himself to regaining the English crown by seeking restoration through "Catholic" Ireland, where he managed to garner enough support to challenge William. The war began with James and his ragtag Irish army laying siege to the Ulster city of Londonderry, where twenty-thousand Protestants had converged. Thirteen Protestant apprentice boys rushed forward and locked the main gates of the city just prior to James' arrival, thus preventing the Catholic army from entering (Dewar, 1985, p. 13). William's navy eventually broke the siege and relieved the beleaguered

garrison.

The summer of 1690 witnessed the arrival of William and his well-trained, well-disciplined army to Ireland. In July, James II and his Catholic "soldiers" suffered defeat at the hands of William in the now famous (or infamous) Battle of the Boyne in county Meath. Despite the defeat of James, the last of Catholic resistance was not subdued until the Battle of Aughum, closing the war's final chapter. William was probably acting in good faith toward the Catholic leaders and their supporters (Finnegan, 1983, p. 11) when he made several promises of fair treatment under the Treaty of Limmerick (1691). However, William's "co-religionists" in the English Parliament and in Dublin had no intention of honoring the terms.

#### Penal Laws

Anti-Catholic sentiment ran deep within the Protestant communities of Ireland and in much of England. A series of discriminatory laws aimed at destroying any and all Catholic influence and privilege were passed between 1695-1727. The "penal laws," as they came to be known, made life as a Catholic almost unbearable. They barred Catholics from practicing law, purchasing land, voting, or even owning a horse worth more than five pounds. By 1703, the penal laws, in conjunction with the expansion of plantation, reduced

Catholic landholding to just 14 percent in all of Ireland and only 5 percent in Ulster (Dewar, 1985, p. 13). The harshness of these laws left indelible marks on the Irish-Catholic psyche just as the memory of Londonderry reinforced the "siege mentality" of Irish-Protestants. In 1969, these same fears and antagonisms once again resurfaced, breathing new life into the smoldering flames of sectarian hatred.

#### Rebellion and Famine

The penal laws were gradually relaxed during the eighteenth century. Catholics found a voice for their cause in Protestants like Henry Grattan, who fought for the easing of civil and religious restrictions on Catholics. As an example, Catholics regained the right to vote (with limitations) under the terms of the Catholic Relief Act in 1778. These acts of reconciliation by Britain, however, were taken less out of good-will than political necessity (Langford, 1981, p. 22). In the latter half of the eighteenth century, Britain faced a host of problems including conflicts in America and with France. The British feared an Irish Catholic alliance with one of their enemies and used the relaxation of the penal laws as a way of muting ideas of possible rebellion. But the Irish Catholic bitterness, forged by years of fighting and repression, far outweighed British attempts at resolution.

Between 1700 and 1800, the population in Ireland nearly doubled (Wilson, 1989, p. 18), resulting in severe competition between Catholics and Protestants for land. In Ulster, Protestant and Catholic peasants created new and secret agrarian societies as a way of protecting themselves from other land-hungry peasants or greedy landlords. The best known of these secret societies were the Catholic "Defenders" and the Protestant "Peep O'Day Boys," who often met in vicious sectarian duels. In September 1795, a group of Defenders assembled to confront a contingent of Peep O'Day Boys at a crossroads in Loughgall known as "the Diamond." The Protestants quickly ran the Defenders from the field and it is from this battle that we can trace the birth of the Orange Order (named for William of Orange). Originally a defensive organization of rural Protestants pledged to defend the crown (Bardon, 1992, p. 226), the Orange Order today is a symbol of the preservation of Protestant ascendancy in Ulster. All of these agrarian organizations rationalized their often brutal actions by citing the atrocities committed by the other side. This justification for "action without responsibility" (Wilson, 1989, p. 18) is still used by the paramilitary organizations in Northern Ireland.

Despite continued religious tensions at the end of the

eighteenth century, there were those in Ireland (Catholic and Protestant) who believed that a secular, independent Ireland was possible. In 1798, led by an energetic and charismatic leader named Wolfe Tone, the Society of United Irishmen waged a rebellion against British rule. The rebellion was carried out primarily by Catholic peasants in County Wexford, motivated by their long-standing grievances against religious oppression and landlord abuse (Finnegan, 1983, p. 15). Tone, a Protestant, had additional support from other liberal Protestants as well as from a French Revolutionary Army contingent that supplied some arms and manpower. Although the rebellion was eventually crushed, the impact on Britain and Ireland was great. Fearing future rebellions, the British viewed legal union between Great Britain and Ireland as the only way to keep Ireland from being used as a base of operations by enemies of the crown. The Catholic church initially supported union, given British promises of Catholic emancipation and funding for the Irish clergy. The Act of Union (1801) was Ulster's first step toward a permanent relationship with Great Britain.

The most influential event of nineteenth-century Ireland was, without doubt, the famine of 1845-1851. Although Protestants also experienced the famine's wrath, it was undoubtedly the Catholic peasantry that bore the brunt

of its devastating effects. An estimated one million Irish died of starvation or disease, while at least another million migrated to England, America, Australia, and Canada. The Irish population dropped from roughly 8.5 million in 1846 to 5.5 million at the end of 1851. The famine left many Irish with bitter memories and an increased hatred of their British rulers, feelings that have been passed down from generation to generation.

The famine occurred in conjunction with a new movement in the mid-nineteenth century called cultural nationalism. More and more, Catholicism became associated with the Irish "national identity." The rise of cultural nationalism was partly in response to Anglo-Saxon racism. Irish Protestants thought themselves superior to Catholics, whom they felt were under the authoritarian and superstitious rule of the pope. This view of Catholics continues and can be summed up in the sentiment of one contemporary Northern Ireland university teacher who says, "How can you betray us? (Referring to Britain) We feel we're being left on our own to fight fanatical bigots who want to take us back to the dark ages and the ruthless oppressiveness of the Roman Church" (Parker, 1993, p. 131).

The immigration caused by the famine had the side effect of exporting Irish nationalism, especially to the

United States. Fenianism, the forerunner of future Irish Republicanism, was a trans-Atlantic movement that originated simultaneously in New York and Dublin. Irish-American nationalism became a powerful force, with the ability to pressure the United States government into addressing Irish concerns as well as lending support to nationalist movements back in Ireland. Groups like the Gaelic League and the Gaelic Athletic Association were created in Ireland to give Catholics a sense of unity, but they also reinvigorated the Protestant "Orange movements" and widened the religious divide.

#### Home Rule

Despite a small but growing call for Irish independence at the end of the nineteenth century, the movement for Irish Home Rule dominated British-Irish affairs until World War I. Led by Irish-Protestant Charles Stewart Parnell, the first Home Rule bill was introduced in 1886 but quickly defeated in the House of Commons. In 1892, a second Home Rule bill was introduced, managing to pass in Commons only to be vetoed by the House of Lords. Even with the hard-won approval in the House of Commons, the only way to pass a Home Rule bill was to somehow circumvent the House of Lords, whose opposition appeared insurmountable. But political maneuvering by the Liberal Party in the first decade of the



twentieth century forced the House of Lords to surrender its power to veto legislation absolutely. Under the terms of the Parliament Act (1911), if a measure was passed by the House of Commons in three consecutive sessions, it would automatically receive royal assent and the House of Lords was helpless to stop it. The door for Home Rule was now open.

In 1912, the Liberal Party, backed by a majority of Irish members of parliament (MPs), won approval for Home Rule in the House of Commons with a scheduled implementation date of 1914. Home Rule supporters in Ireland, believing total Irish independence an unlikely and unrealistic option, were willing to defer to the limits of Home Rule. Anti-Home Rulers in mostly Protestant Ulster feared that Home Rule meant Catholic or "Rome Rule." What the British government did not anticipate was the Ulster Unionists' determination to oppose Home Rule by any means necessary.

Unionists, led by Conservative Party leaders Sir Edward Carson and Andrew Bonar Law, refused to accept the idea of Home Rule (Hartley, 1987). Almost a million Unionists and their sympathizers signed (some with blood) the Solemn League and Covenant attesting to the Protestant determination to resist. Furthermore, Unionists contemplated forging an alliance with Germany in order to

aid in resisting implementation of Home Rule. Although talk of a German-Unionist pact was not taken seriously by Britain, it did underscore the level of anti-Home Rule feelings.

By 1914, it had become increasingly clear to Irish Catholics and the British government that Unionists were preparing to back up their talk of resistance with deeds. Thousands of rifles and assorted ammunition were smuggled into Northern Ireland, with British customs and Ulster police either unable or unwilling to stop the flood of weapons coming ashore. In conjunction with the increase in illegal arms was the rapid growth of Unionist paramilitary organizations. Even more disturbing to Britain was the declaration of fifty-eight army officers that they would accept dismissal rather than enforce Home Rule in Ulster. Alarmed, Nationalists began similar preparations for armed conflict by forming their own citizens' armies. The fear of Irish civil war abated with the German invasion of Belgium in August 1914, allowing the British government to postpone action on Home Rule until after the war in Europe had concluded.

Seeing their chance to break free from Britain once again slipping away, many Irish Nationalists no longer viewed Home Rule as either viable or desirable. Born from

Fenianism and fed by the crises on the continent, the movement for Irish independence began to grow. Of great significance during this time was the growth of sectarian paramilitary organizations. Most of these organizations (Catholic and Protestant) were created in response to the issue of Home Rule, but many continued to recruit and openly to drill even after the Home Rule bill's suspension in 1914.

### The Easter Rising

The postponement of Home Rule was certainly a blow to the Irish struggle for devolution. Some Nationalists groups, in particular the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), forerunners of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), recognized the widening European conflagration as an opportunity to strike out, not for Home Rule but for independence (Caufield, 1995). The idea of an Irish Republic manifested itself in the spring of 1916 in the form of armed insurrection, known as the "Easter Rising." In military terms, the rising was an unequivocal failure. In terms of galvanizing anti-British sentiment in Ireland and igniting the flames of support for independence, it was a complete success.

Continued paramilitary activity in 1914-1915 and the apparent growth of "sedition" in Ireland put pressure on the British to deal firmly with both Protestant and Catholic

organizations suspected of breaking the law. But the British were hesitant to move against the Protestants for fear of losing Unionist support for the war in Europe. Also, British authorities in Ireland did not take seriously the idea of a Nationalist rebellion. Consumed with wartime events on the European continent, Britain felt no real sense of urgency to take action in Ireland. On the morning of April 23, 1916, Easter Sunday, the IRB and the Irish Citizens Army initiated a rebellion, much to the surprise of the British and most Irish. Although the British were aware of plans for a rebellion, the capture of the rebel leader Roger Casement and a large cache of weapons convinced British authorities in Ireland that insurrection was now highly unlikely. With an "army" of between 700-1400 men, the Irish "rebels" moved into the heart of Dublin, set up their headquarters at the General Post Office (Caufield, 1995), and declared an Irish Republic. Lack of support and overwhelming British military superiority finally forced the rebels to surrender on 29 April. Where the rebellion failed at producing Irish solidarity, the British actions in the aftermath succeeded.

The British chose to deal with the rebels in an extremely harsh manner. Martial Law was proclaimed and British General Sir John Maxwell became the ultimate

authority in Ireland. Hundreds of Irish were interned without trial, most having had nothing to do with the rebellion. Secret military trials were held and ninety rebels were sentenced to death, fifteen of whom were actually killed (Lawlor, 1983). The severity with which the British dealt with the rebels caused a huge backlash in Ireland and abroad in the United States. Many Irish now became convinced that British rule in Ireland would forever be authoritarian, and support for an Irish Republic increased. From the ashes of the failed rebellion rose a renewed determination, with significant popular support, to resist British authority.

#### Partition

By 1916, it was evident that the First World War was going to be longer and more costly than anyone in Britain had previously imagined. Conscription in Great Britain put literally every available man under arms, but the manpower requirements continued to escalate (Hartley, 1987), and the British government saw a solution to their problem in Irish conscription to "fill the foxholes." Sinn Fein (meaning "ourselves alone") was an organization founded in 1905 (Baldy, 1972, p. 40) as a movement for Irish independence which originally advocated nothing more than passive resistance of British rule. Sinn Fein's policy opposing

conscription vaulted it to the top of the Irish Nationalist movement. Although resistance to conscription was successful, thousands of Irishmen (especially Protestants) voluntarily fought alongside the British. With the exception of Unionists (predominantly in Ulster), the movement for independence among the Irish continued to gain steam.

In 1918, members of Sinn Fein elected to the British Parliament refused to take their seats at Westminster and convened their own parliament in Dublin, called the Dail Eireann. The Dail declared a republic and elected Eamon de Valera, a former commander in the Easter Rising, as its president. The British refused to recognize the new government, spurring Irish paramilitary organizations to pursue a guerilla-war campaign against both Irish and British civil authorities. Exhausted by the First World War and anxious to find a solution to the Irish problem, Britain entered negotiations with the leaders of the provisional Irish government. Britain and the Irish Nationalists were unable to achieve a consensus on terms of a settlement. Ultimately, the British Parliament passed the Government of Ireland Act (1920), which resulted in the southern twenty-six counties gaining dominion status under the name "Irish Free State," and the six northeastern counties of Ulster

becoming the separate dominion of Northern Ireland. The "Irish Free State" remained a part of the British Commonwealth until 1949, when it declared itself an independent republic.

Partition created a Northern Ireland with a Protestant majority by eliminating three counties of historic Ulster. But the new dominion had a significant Catholic minority as well. Already poor relations between Catholics and Protestants further degenerated under a repressive, Protestant-dominated Unionist government whose ideal of a "Protestant nation for a Protestant people" highlighted the seemingly irreconcilable sectarian divisions in Ulster. Catholic rights were all but ignored in employment, elections, education, and the judicial system, making the belief that Catholics within Northern Ireland were fundamentally disloyal a "self-fulfilling prophecy" (Baldy, 1987, p. 44). In addition, the Catholic Church's insistence on private education resulted in the creation of a separate school system that consequently contributed to Ulster's "sectarian separation."

In times of internal crises, the overwhelmingly Protestant Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) received support from the hated "B-Specials," a Protestant auxiliary (paramilitary) force created in the 1920s to augment civil

authorities (Coogan, 1995, p. 22). The B-Specials were a well-armed organization with a reputation within the Catholic community for being particularly brutal. Stormont used the powers of the Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act of 1922 to hold people without charge or trial, conduct searches, and make arrests without a warrant. Provisions of the Special Powers Act were used almost exclusively against the Catholic population. Protestants controlled all facets of Ulster political life by the utilization of household (ownership) suffrage and plural votes for business owners. Few Catholics owned homes or businesses, and discrimination in employment ensured they would have little opportunity to do so in the future.

Although there was no shortage of suffering among the Protestant working-class (the Northern Irish unemployment rate in 1939 was 20 percent compared to Britain's 7.5 percent [Rowthorn & Naomi, 1988, p. 71]), sectarian divisions precluded a unified working-class movement. Average Catholic rates of unemployment were much higher than their Protestant counterparts, largely due to the Protestant monopoly on jobs in the shipbuilding and textile industries. Catholics did make some gains in employment beginning in the late 1950s, but their rates of unemployment remained roughly twice those of Protestants throughout the 1960s. Despite a



short-lived IRA resurgence from 1956 to 1962, it wasn't until the mid-1960s that Catholic demands for fair and equal treatment became a mass movement in Northern Ireland.

### Civil Rights

The plight of disaffected (predominantly Catholic) Northern Irish "entered British political consciousness" (Arthur & Jeffery, 1988, p. 5) in 1968 with the civil rights movement sponsored by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA). The NICRA was originally a non-partisan, non-sectarian movement with some very specific goals including the end of discrimination in employment and housing, repeal of the Special Powers Act, termination of the B-Specials and abolition of the plural franchise. Initial demonstrations were peaceful, but overreaction by Ulster authorities, who mistakenly believed NICRA to be a Nationalist front, quickly led to violence. In 1968, marchers in Londonderry were fiercely attacked by the RUC, resulting in the injury of some 88 demonstrators (Finnegan, 1983, p. 126).

Violence peaked the following summer with rioting in Londonderry and Belfast. The annual August 12 Apprentice Boys' march, a Protestant celebration of the seventeenth-century "victory" over James II, turned violent when Catholic crowds and Protestant marchers confronted one

another. The situation quickly escalated beyond the RUC's crowd control ability. More rioting ensued resulting in scores of injuries including at least 800 RUC members (Barzilay, 1973, p. 6) and thousands more civilians.

In mid-August of 1969, Northern Ireland seemed on the verge of a civil war. Stormont decided to request deployment of British soldiers, believing they were essential if order was to be restored. Westminster approved the request to use the British army "in aid to civil authority," fully anticipating a return to civil control in a matter of days. Westminster, Stormont, and the army all underestimated the depth of Ulster's political, social, and economic problems. As the army's relations with the Catholic community deteriorated, Catholics turned to the long-dormant IRA, which they believed to be their sole source of protection against repressive British-Unionist authorities. In addition, Protestant paramilitary organizations quickly became part of the Ulster landscape, claiming to be the protectors of Protestants from Catholic "terrorists." The British army soon found itself both hero and villain - depending on whom you asked and in which direction the political winds were blowing.

#### Summary

The situation in Northern Ireland between 1969-1974 is

an extension of its turbulent history. Although the British level of involvement in Ireland has vacillated over the past several hundred years, some military and political presence has been constant. The "planting" of non-Irish, non-Catholic settlers, especially in Ulster, forever changed Ireland. Sectarian feuding created essentially two communities, a fact little changed over the centuries. The Act of Union and partition pulled Northern Ireland further into Great Britain's orbit. Unionists' "siege mentality" is enforced by their fear of a British "sell out" of their homeland to Eire and an almost pathologic hatred of Catholics. Nationalists carry the weight of British political oppression and an equally intense distrust of their Protestant countrymen. These "preconditions of historic conflict, ethnic tension and persistent violence" (Finnegan, 1983, p. 146) ensure no easy solution to "the Irish troubles."

## Chapter Two

### The Threat

In this chapter I answer the question of who is the threat in Northern Ireland between 1969 and 1974: a difficult task as suggested by the old Ulster saying, "If you are totally confused about what is happening in Northern Ireland, then you are just beginning to understand it." Part of grasping the "troubles" in Northern Ireland is knowing why Stormont (and Westminster) felt that the deployment of home-based British soldiers in 1969 was essential. Just as important is recognizing why the threat (Protestant and Catholic paramilitary groups) considered armed insurrection their only recourse in solving their social, political, and economic grievances.

Historical examination of paramilitary or "terrorist" organizations is essential in order to understand their *raison d'être*. I will provide an overview of the two dominant Protestant paramilitary organizations, the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and the Ulster Defense Association (UDA). Discussion of these organizations will be followed by a review of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), which was clearly viewed by the British and Northern Irish governments as the most immediate and dangerous threat to continued Home Rule in Northern Ireland. Since the IRA cannot be

understood without delving into its past, an account of the IRA's evolution is necessary in order to contextualize their activities between 1969 and 1974.

### The Ulster Volunteer Force

The tumultuous period of the late 1960s witnessed the rebirth in Northern Ireland of the UVF, also known as "the secret Protestant private army." Unlike other paramilitary organizations, Protestant and Catholic, the UVF maintained a cloak of secrecy, even within close-knit Protestant communities, that gave it an aura of power. It was both respected and feared. Founded in 1966, the modern UVF traces its origins to the Home Rule debate of the early 1900s.

British politicians have struggled throughout the twentieth century with the question of Ireland's future. Should Ireland become independent or should it remain within the United Kingdom? Approval of the Home Rule Bill in 1912 appeared to settle the matter despite the measure's unpopularity with a majority of Ulster Protestants and the British political and ruling elite. Ulster Unionists, believing themselves to be every bit as British as people from Liverpool or Dover, began preparations to resist Irish Nationalists, the British army, or both rather than submit to Home Rule (Biggs-Davison, 1973, p. 79).

Protestant social clubs, including the many Orange Lodges found in Ulster, began military type drilling of what were essentially private armies. By the end of 1912, these organizations united under the name Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). Protestant businessmen and landowners took commissions in the UVF along with members of the British officer corps who were sympathetic to the UVF cause. Anti-Home Rule British army officers at the Curragh barracks in Ireland made a show of solidarity with Protestant Ulster by announcing their refusal to enforce Home Rule should the order be given. This "moral" victory for the Unionists strengthened their resolve. As David Boulton states, "The UVF won its first engagement without firing a shot" (1973, p. 20). Between 1912 and 1914, the ranks of the UVF swelled to an estimated 90,000 members. After a successful gun-running operation at Larne harbor in 1914, the UVF could back up its rhetoric with a bonafide show of force (Kelly, 1982, p. 29).

The outbreak of the First World War, pitting Britain against Germany, posed a bit of a dilemma for the UVF, as the Germans had been their chief supplier of weapons. Britain now called on all Irishmen (in particular Ulster Protestants) to take up arms and fight "the enemy of the crown." The UVF ultimately fought as the 36th (Ulster)

Division within the British army. The division paid dearly for its loyalty while fighting at the Somme in 1916, where nearly all its members were wiped out. The Unionists' sacrifices did not go unrewarded, however. Due in part to the loyal Ulster participation in the war effort, Great Britain made the fateful decision in 1920 to partition Ireland so that resisters would not be forced to accept Home Rule as a minority. Furthermore, the British approved the reorganization of the UVF into a new official organization called the Ulster Special Constabulary or B-Specials (Dunn, 1995, p. 188). Unionists used the B-Specials essentially as a private army for the next 50 years to protect Protestant ascendancy in Northern Ireland. The UVF as a separate organization dwindled when most of its members either joined the B-Specials or quit the paramilitary business.

In 1966, the people of Northern Ireland confronted economic difficulty and growing social unrest. The economy, which depended heavily on shipbuilding and textile manufacturing, faced a decrease in demand, an increase in world competition, and lack of modernization. It was in these industries, which had not modernized methods of production, that the Protestant working-class "enjoyed a clear ascendancy over Catholic workers" (Boulton, 1973, p. 24). Potential economic instability threatened the fragile

alliance between the working and upper-class Protestants. Adding fuel to the fire, the demand for civil rights by Catholics, while still in its infant stages, was growing. Many of the Protestant working-class viewed the civil rights movement simply as a Catholic movement toward gaining favoritism in employment, housing and social programs. It was during this time of economic and social upheaval that the UVF was reborn.

Manpower and support for the UVF was drawn exclusively from the working class. Augustus "Gusty" Spence, who came from a family with a long history in the Orange Order, is generally viewed as the founder of the modern UVF (Boulton, 1973). A former soldier in the British army, Spence returned to Northern Ireland in the early 1960s and secured a job as a stager in the Harland and Wolff shipyard. Like many of his co-workers, he was concerned about Catholic intrusion into jobs traditionally reserved for Protestants. Spence and others were convinced that direct action was necessary in order to save jobs, maintain law and order, and protect their way of life. The Northern Irish government, led by Prime Minister Terrence O'Neill, banned the UVF (Wilson, 1989, p. 169) in 1966 by using the Special Powers Act (1922). The banning was a shock to the Protestant psyche, not accustomed to the Special Powers Act being used



against anyone except Catholics. The "ideals" of the UVF, however, remained popular among much of the Protestant working-class as well as among members of the B-Specials.

Continued tension between Catholic and Protestant communities fed the growing ranks of other Protestant "defense" and political organizations. It was very common to belong to several of these organizations at the same time, with UVF members being no exception. Incarceration of a majority of the UVF leadership in the late 1960s by the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) took a toll on membership (Coogan, 1995, p. 50). It is widely believed that between 1967 and 1971, a membership "core" that did not exceed a dozen or so members was all that comprised the UVF. But increasing skirmishes in 1968 and 1969 between the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) and Protestants made the ground fertile for the rebirth and growth of UVF activity.

The situation moved to a critical stage in the early months of 1969, as Prime Minister O'Neill grew less and less popular among the Loyalists who viewed him as "soft" on Catholics. In March and April, a series of explosions in and around Belfast damaged an electric sub-station and caused extensive damage to water control valves in County Down, severely reducing the Belfast water supply (Barzilay,

1973, p. 3). The IRA was initially blamed for the attacks, but the bombings were actually planned and executed by the UVF. Although small in size, the UVF proved its ability to affect politics at the national level. The main objective of the bombings was to weaken the O'Neill government - a goal realized when O'Neill resigned as Prime Minister in late April 1969.

The increase in violence in 1970 and 1971 further polarized the Unionist and Nationalist communities. By the end of 1971, the resurgent UVF had adopted a military-type force structure that included the creation of companies, battalions, divisions, and wearing military dress during rare public displays. Although the UVF was established first and foremost as a military organization, its "companies" or "battalions" were more often than not simply members of drinking clubs. Coordination of activities between "units" was rare, as each acted on its own initiative (Bell, 1987, pp. 165-166).

#### Ulster Defense Association

Protestant paramilitary or "defense" organizations that were primarily local in nature and membership were brought together in 1971 by the establishment of the Ulster Defense Association (UDA). A majority of these "defense" or "vigilante" groups were centered in or around Belfast, with

the Woodvale Defense Association (WDA) being the most influential. A big problem for the UDA in these early days was combining the many small groups into a larger and more cohesive one. Each group tended to maintain allegiance to its own leader. What united all UDA members was the desire to convince the Unionist public that they were not a Protestant version of the IRA. The UDA placed itself at the vanguard of the fight against anti-state, subversive rebels (referring to the IRA) who killed with little regard for human life in an effort to destroy their Protestant enemies (Bell, 1987, p. 166).

Regardless of general resentment or even hatred toward Catholics, "a lot of ordinary Protestants did not want to believe that their people bombed pubs and killed innocent Catholics" (Bruce, 1992, p. 53). The UDA presented itself as a defense against the "papist" aggressor, as law-abiding citizens versus the criminal IRA. But UDA attempts at taking the moral high ground proved difficult. Ferreting out and successfully targeting actual IRA members was not easy to do. More often than not, killing Catholics, regardless of their "legitimacy" as rebel targets, satisfied the UDA, although it publicly denied involvement in sectarian murders.

Poor coordination of effort and lack of communication

between UDA units was similar to the problems experienced by the UVF. This is best illustrated in the words of one UDA member who said:

"We never planned to go on the kill. There was no time that we sat down and said 'that's it. Stiff a Taig'. Mind, we planned doing something to the Ardoyne after the three Scots boys were killed but for some reason it never came off. No, it was ground up. One or two volunteers just started doing it" (Bruce, 1992, p. 54).

Some of the direct action elements within the UDA called themselves the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF). Although bombings and killings were not done exclusively by the UFF, it was the recognized *nom de guerre* for the UDA.

Membership in the UDA grew rapidly, with claims of having signed up 26,000 just one year after its creation. Despite conflicts within the organization, the UDA at times displayed remarkable unity of effort. One such instance occurred in 1972 around the Ainsworth avenue district of Belfast. Beginning in the late summer of 1969, the IRA had established what were termed No-Go areas where entire Catholic communities barricaded themselves against intrusion by either the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) or the military. Because neither the government nor the military appeared willing to retake the areas "held hostage" by the IRA, the UDA decided to establish its own own No-Go areas. More symbolic in nature than anything else, the UDA said its

No-Go areas would remain as long as there were Catholic No-Go areas (Hamill, 1985, pp. 108-109). In May 1972, British paratroopers stormed one of the UDA barricades. This ignited Protestant rioting. Thousands of UDA members descended on and around Ainsworth Avenue, firm in their resolve to face down the soldiers. In an attempt to deflate the crisis peacefully, the British General Officer Commanding (GOC) land forces entered into dialogue with UDA leaders. An agreement was reached that included the tearing down of the barricades and permission to let UDA members patrol the streets alongside British army patrols. This successful display of UDA unity bolstered loyalist morale, showed the organization's true potential for violence, and attracted many new recruits.

Economic unrest in Ulster in the early 1970s continued to feed the Protestant community's appetite for the creation of working-class organizations to protect their "rights." The Ulster Workers Council (UWC), created in 1974 to bolster trade union influence in domestic affairs, played a key role in the events of that year. More oriented toward trade union activity, the UWC did not initially "wear the same clothes" as paramilitary or vigilante organizations like the UDA. By virtue of the fact that many UWC members belonged concurrently to the UDA, however, the organizations

maintained close relations (Dunn, 1995, p. 12). Using their bond of common interests, the UDA and UWC united in opposition to a new peace initiative that included power sharing for Northern Ireland.

In 1973, the government of Great Britain spearheaded an attempt to settle the "troubles" by creating a power-sharing assembly (Bruce, 1992). The sharing of power by Great Britain, Eire, and Northern Ireland appeared to Unionists to be just another form of Home Rule whose real intent was the eventual unification of Ireland. Unionists saw no reason why Eire should have any say in Northern Ireland's affairs.

In mid-May 1974, the UWC called for an indefinite general strike in protest of Sunningdale. Strike-induced hardships within the civilian and business communities forced the UDA to make executive decisions related to the distribution of essential food and energy supplies. UDA officers thus played a critical role in the strike's success and greatly enhanced their status in the Protestant community. Pressure from the strike led directly to the termination of the power-sharing initiative as well as the British government's hope of settling Unionist and Nationalist differences through political accommodation (Dunn, 1995, p. 121).

Although the UVF and UDA were successful in recruiting

the working-class Protestants in Northern Ireland, by and large the middle class avoided active participation in paramilitary organizations. Middle-class Unionists never shared with the working class the sense of urgency regarding the situation; this left a pool of potential leaders outside the ranks of the UVF and the UDA. For these middle-class Protestants that did wish to participate in the fight against the IRA, there were the options of serving as an RUC reserve or joining the Ulster Defense Regiment (UDR).

A major government concession to the Catholic community in 1969 was the dissolution of the hated B-Specials (Rees, 1984, p. 8). As a replacement, the UDR, an official branch of the British army whose members were drawn exclusively from Northern Ireland, was created. State agencies (RUC and army) and pro-state paramilitary organizations drew from the same population base, but state organizations had significant advantages in attracting the more desirable recruits. Some of these advantages included legality of the organization, respectability, and pay. State organizations could also afford the luxury of being more selective, leaving the UVF and UDA to pick through the remains.

Finally, the creation of the UVF and the UDA can generally be seen as a result of the perceived threat of republican violence and as a bulwark against the

encroachment on Protestant hegemony of Irish nationalism. The increasing number of sectarian murders committed by the UDA made the division of activity between themselves and the UVF a blur. Attempts by the UVF and UDA to draw parallels between themselves and the original volunteers of 1912 were weak at best (Dunn, 1995, p. 115). The 1912 volunteers had garnered mass support from the upper and middle classes, who saw the Northern Irish state in imminent danger of being swallowed up by Home Rule. Though threats of nationalism and power sharing were still a cause for concern in the early 1970s, the modern-day middle class saw no imminent danger. Furthermore, the random and seemingly unnecessary murder of innocent people pushed the Protestant mainstream away (at least overtly) from supporting paramilitary activity.

Referring to the reestablishment of direct rule by Britain in 1972, Roy Hattersley, former Minister of State in Northern Ireland stated, "It won't be the IRA which will make the position untenable, but the people the army are supposed to be protecting from the IRA." Despite vacillating support of British peace efforts, the Protestant paramilitary organizations never wavered in their commitment to fighting their hated enemy the IRA.



### The Irish Republican Army

IRA roots are planted firmly in the past. The resurgence of IRA activity in Northern Ireland beginning in 1969 was merely a continuation of ongoing, historical conflict. Resistance to British "occupation" of Ireland can be traced all the way back to the twelfth century, when Britain first made claim to the island. Also, sectarian divisions that began with the reformation and plantations in the sixteenth century have resulted in countless (deadly) Catholic-Protestant confrontations.

Origins of the "modern" movement for independence began with the rebellion in 1798. Taking inspiration from the American and French revolutions, Wolfe Tone led his United Irishmen in revolt with demands of Irish freedom. Tone's rebellion eventually failed, but his example of sacrifice and dedication to the cause of independence was a beacon of inspiration to future Irish Nationalists.

It was, however, events in the nineteenth century that most influenced the present century's movement(s) for an independent Ireland. From the tragedy of the potato famine in the late 1840s sprouted new calls for independence in Ireland and abroad. The Fenian Brotherhood, founded in New York and Dublin in 1858, was a nationalist-based organization created by both Irish expatriots and those

still in Ireland committed to an autonomous Ireland. Fenians in Ireland, calling themselves the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), later played a critical role in the "Easter Rising." Both the Fenian Brotherhood and the IRB were dedicated to "the swift and violent removal of British rule" (Bishop & Mallie, 1987, p. 11). In the 1860s the IRB began a series of bombings and killings in both England and Ireland in hopes of stirring the Irish into action. The rebellion never materialized into anything more than isolated acts of terror and had faded away by 1867. What is important is the fact that from the outset, the rebels maintained the Republican priority of an independent Ireland. The IRB remained essentially inactive until the second decade of the twentieth century.

As previously discussed, the Protestant-dominated Ulster Volunteers was created in 1912 to fight *against* enforcement of Home Rule. This resulted in the creation of the Catholic-dominated Irish Volunteers, committed to fighting *for* Home Rule. The long-dormant IRB, ideologically opposed to the tenants of Home Rule or anything short of a free and united Ireland, infiltrated the ranks of the Irish Volunteers in hopes of furthering the cause of independence. But it was the British government's suspension of Home Rule in 1914 that provided the IRB with an excuse for initiating

an insurrection. Believing that "Britain's troubles are Ireland's opportunities," the IRB, with Irish Volunteers in tow, launched the 1916 "Easter Rising." Patrick Pearse, one of the rebel leaders, signed a dispatch on the second day of the rebellion with the title, "Commandant General of the Irish Republican Army." It is from this communique that we trace the modern name of Republican paramilitaries (Caufield, 1995). Just as the rebellion in 1798 and the 1860s failed, the Rising also ended in humiliation and defeat. Despite their loss, members of the IRB, now called the Irish Republican Army (IRA), survived with their resolve at gaining Irish independence intact.

By 1918, the Irish Volunteers were considerably stronger and more organized than their counterparts in 1916 had been. In support of another provisional Irish government, the Volunteers began openly defying the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC), proclaiming themselves the official army of the new "Irish Republic." IRA members within the ranks of the Irish Volunteers carried out most of the attacks on the RIC and members of the British armed forces. Although the killings brought about widespread disgust, especially from the church, the new Irish "government" resisted moving against the IRA. In order to bring a cessation to hostilities, the British government and

leaders of the provisional Irish Republic came to a compromise that included partition. Michael Collins, chief negotiator for the Irish, was not completely satisfied with the terms of the agreement, but he accepted it as "a stepping stone to the republic" (Kelly, 1982, p. 43).

Approved in December 1921, this agreement immediately set in motion a divisive inter-Irish confrontation. The IRA and its hard-core followers refused to accept anything short of a united Ireland completely free of British influence. By June 1922, former comrades-in-arms were now locked in a vicious civil war between pro-treaty and anti-treaty supporters. The brutality used by the new Irish government in suppressing the IRA rivaled that of the British just a few years earlier. Worn down from years of fighting and realizing that they could not win, the IRA called a cease-fire in 1923, and its members once again retreated underground.

Down but not out, the IRA resurfaced in the early 1950s. Its focus was no longer the Irish government who "caved" on the issue of partition; the priority target was now the British "occupation" forces in Northern Ireland. Not seeing a viable political solution to removing British influence in Northern Ireland, the IRA conceived a border campaign of "flying columns" of IRA units crossing the

border to fight Northern Irish security forces. Knowing there was no chance of an outright military victory, the IRA hoped their action would be a catalyst for change similar to the "Easter Rising." Between the years 1956 and 1962, the IRA conducted sporadic cross-border raids that resulted in occasional clashes with the Northern Irish security elements but never amounted to anything more than isolated incidents. Once the element of surprise was lost, the security forces were fairly effective in limiting IRA border activity. With little support from the Irish Republic or the Catholic communities in Northern Ireland, the IRA called off the border war in 1962. But the IRA's adherence to a doctrine of physical force would, a few years later, bring it again to the center of "the Irish question."

Many Unionists have always been convinced that the civil rights movement in the latter half of the 1960s was mere window dressing for a newly resurgent IRA. This idea is not entirely without merit. Members of the IRA were attracted to the movement and in fact many joined the NICRA. However, any attempts by the IRA to put forward an agenda other than civil rights was rejected. Initially peaceful civil rights protests in 1968 were increasingly met with force by the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), B-Specials, and Protestant gangs. By 1969, the potential for violence

was great enough that NICRA looked to the IRA for protection during their marches. While the IRA was essentially ineffective as a political or protection force, their presence at NICRA marches was of great symbolic importance. The IRA quickly grabbed the moral high ground, claiming to be protectors of the Catholic community from Protestant repression. Police brutality, combined with their apparent indifference to rampaging Protestant gangs, gave the IRA an effective propaganda tool for recruitment.

In August 1969, rioting grew beyond the RUC's ability to control it, resulting in the British deployment of its army to aid in reestablishing law and order. To the horror of some Republicans, the Catholic community initially welcomed the army with open arms (Langford, 1981, p. 123). Despite the IRA's rhetoric, its ability to counteract Protestant violence was minimal. The army seemed to be the only hope for peace, initially playing an "even hand" in dealing with Catholic and Protestant agitators. The hope within the Catholic community was that the army would play the role of protector, a role that the IRA appeared incapable of filling.

Like the Protestant paramilitaries, the IRA was a collection of people who often had mixed ideas of "how things should be" with little consensus on strategy or

coordination of effort. There were people within the IRA committed to a "hard line" approach on the issues in Northern Ireland. These "traditionalists" would settle for nothing less than a thirty-two county united Ireland with no outside (British) influence. Traditionalists were less concerned about involving themselves in politics, believing that direct (forceful) action was required (Kelly, 1982, p. 128). Another faction believed in working within the established political systems and felt a political solution should be pursued over a military one. Traditionalists stood firm on the issue of abstentionism, whereby any action on their part was to occur outside the formal government establishments of Westminster, Stormont and Leinster House (the Irish Parliament). This clash of strategy led to the IRA splitting into two factions, the Official (OIRA) and the Provisional IRA (PIRA).

#### The Official Irish Republican Army

Cathal Goulding was the charismatic leader of the OIRA who wanted the IRA to be seen as a "party" and not as a "movement." He considered rapprochement with the Protestant working-class community possible since grievances of the Catholic working-class were essentially the same. The OIRA put forward the idea of advancing their agenda within the parliamentary systems in Northern Ireland and Eire (Coogan,

1995, pp. 94-97). The use of force was seen as a source of defense and not a means to an end. Despite the good, if unrealistic intentions of not using force, the OIRA played a very active role through 1972 in terrorist-type activity. Force was essential if the OIRA was to maintain credibility with large sectors of the Catholic population who increasingly saw direct action as the only avenue for change. But by involving themselves in these type of (direct action) operations, any hopes that remained of uniting with the Protestant working-class disappeared.

#### The Provisional Irish Republican Army

Taking a hard line approach toward the British or anyone else considering a negotiated "peace" short of a united Ireland, the PIRA attracted traditionalists within the IRA. There was an absolute refusal on the part of the PIRA to end abstentionism, since it would be tantamount to recognition of the Government of Ireland Act that partitioned Ireland. In December 1969, the new "Provisional" IRA pledged allegiance to the thirty-two county republic and renounced the OIRA. By September 1970, the provisional period officially came to a close but the name PIRA has stuck (Bardon, 1992, p. 675).

Despite philosophical differences between the two IRAs, it was often hard to distinguish the actions of one group



from the other. The dramatic decline in Catholic-British army relations in the Spring of 1970 had a unifying effect within the Catholic community. It was now us (Catholics) versus them (the Protestants and the army). For the purpose of simplicity, OIRA and PIRA activity will hereto be referred to as IRA unless an issue is specific to one group. The IRA turned its efforts to better organization, becoming less reactive, more proactive, and more "offensive oriented."

Belfast rioting in June 1970 led to new levels of violence (Bardon, 1992, pp. 677-678). In one such instance, several IRA members took up sniping positions in a Belfast churchyard and had an all night battle with Protestant attackers, three of whom were killed by the snipers. The sharp rise of shooting incidents initiated a more forceful approach by the British army in an attempt to halt the attacks. They concentrated their efforts in Catholic areas, striking with CS (tear) gas and house to house searches, permanently alienating the army from the Catholic community. The IRA and their supporters continued to take an increasingly aggressive stance against the civil authorities and Protestant instigators. Although rioting in 1969 became widespread, the IRA in Northern Ireland could count less than a dozen weapons in their arsenal. By 1971, however,

this situation had changed dramatically.

To support the upward spiral of violence and direct action operations, the IRA made continuous efforts at acquiring arms from abroad. Easily the most famous weapon in the IRA arsenal was the Armalite machine gun. The acquisition of a large cache of these weapons from the United States in August 1970 gave the IRA a tremendous boost in firepower. Bomb-grade explosives were also purchased worldwide, primarily by Irish "aid" societies in the United States. Although the IRA lost dozens of its members to prematurely exploding bombs, it was obvious by their ability to plant more than 1,000 bombs in 1971 that they had become proficient in the explosives field.

In 1972, the PIRA claim of being the "real" IRA was realized. The OIRA was in a continuous (and losing) struggle for supporters who more and more backed the PIRA. It was the result of two disastrous OIRA sponsored events that would ultimately signal its defeat. In retaliation for the January 1972 killing of 13 civilians by British paratroopers during a riot in Londonderry, known as "Bloody Sunday," the OIRA planned a show of force to boost their image. In February they detonated a bomb outside the officer's mess of the Parachute Regiment's headquarters in Aldershot, England. The result was the death of five

cleaning women, a Catholic chaplain and a gardener (Rees, 1985, p. 13). The OIRA also murdered a Catholic soldier who was home on leave from the British army. Even if many in the Catholic community could look the other way when (British) soldiers were shot, the idea of Catholics killing their own was met with great indignation. Defections to the PIRA increased at a rapid pace. The dissolution of Stormont and introduction of direct rule by Britain in 1972 was the final nail in the OIRA coffin. The PIRA had as one of their objectives the fall of Stormont. When this occurred and Britain reestablished direct rule, the PIRA took sole credit, holding up this success as proof that their methods for change were working.

The more IRA activity increased, the more IRA members were incarcerated. IRA leadership came to the conclusion that certain gains could only be made in the political arena. By obtaining special political status, IRA prisoners in Northern Ireland and Britain could certify their standing as belligerents in a war rather than a "terrorist gang." As a means of pressuring the British government on the issue, IRA prisoners began a hunger strike in 1972. The British government responded by extending "special category status" to Republican (and Loyalist) prisoners (Wilson, 1989, pp. 188-189). With a major political and moral victory

complete, the IRA called off the prisoners' hunger strike and announced a cease-fire. Unfortunately, continued negotiations failed, and *politics at the point of a gun* soon reestablished itself.

Continuous IRA campaigning put tremendous strain on a community tiring of life in a war zone. The rapid rise in sectarian attacks from 1972 to 1973 (O'Brien, 1993) proved extremely unpopular, as more and more people became victims simply because they happened to be Protestant or Catholic. IRA support dropped precipitously, but this had little effect on its activity. Bombs continued to be planted and businesses, soldiers, or anyone connected with the British occupation continued to be targets.

Sunningdale was the much hoped-for peaceful solution to the Irish problem that moderates on all sides welcomed. But the IRA was no more attracted to the Sunningdale agreement than were the Unionists (although for different reasons). Propaganda coming from the IRA camp included such optimistic slogans as "victory is behind the next bomb" and the proclamation of 1974 - Bliain an Bhua - as "Victory Year." The IRA remained committed to its original demands, the least of which was a united Ireland. The business community continued to be targeted, civilians became unwitting victims, and the cycle of violence proceeded down its deadly

path.

The IRA was a force of relative insignificance up to and through most of 1969, but a combination of police brutality during the civil rights marches and the rise of republicanism allowed the IRA to resurface and take center stage in "the (Northern) Irish question." Despite the split in 1969, the IRA continued to gain power and influence as relations between the Catholic community and civil authorities steadily eroded. When deployment of the army failed to eradicate the violence and solve the myriad of social problems, British soldiers quickly became a symbol of repressive Protestant ascendancy. With no other options seemingly available, the IRA claimed the title of sole defender of Northern Irish Catholics.

#### Summary

One can draw many similarities between the IRA and its Protestant paramilitary counterparts, the UVF and the UDA. All these organizations drew recruits mostly from the working classes, were defined largely along sectarian lines, and saw themselves as fighting a "war" that had been waged intermittently for hundreds of years. The British military had the unenviable task of trying to heal these long-festered social, political and sectarian wounds. The army was at one time or another the target of the IRA, the UVF,

and the UDA. Whenever the Protestant paramilitaries believed that Westminster was on the verge of concession to Catholic demands, the army became a symbol of British treason. The army's repressive and sometime brutal tactics were similarly proof to Catholics that it was nothing more than the enforcer of Protestant ascendancy.

In 1969, the "threat" in Northern Ireland came almost exclusively from rioting civilians. The IRA and the UVF were of no real military significance and posed little danger. The situation in Northern Ireland had deteriorated so swiftly that the army could only "react" to events, while initiative swung to the paramilitary organizations that quickly secured support within their respective communities. The army soon found itself in the middle of historical community antagonisms and distrust. The resurgence of paramilitarism and the widening ethnic and sectarian chasm created the biggest threat to the citizens of Northern Ireland and the British army. It was the IRA's anti-state stand, committed to complete British withdrawal (by force if necessary) and a united Ireland, that vaulted it to the top of British and Northern Irish government's threat list.

### Chapter Three

#### The Call for Deployment

Using the armed forces in a domestic role carries with it significant political, social, and legal ramifications for any democratic government. In this chapter, I address the politics that influenced the British government's decision to deploy its army in aid to civil authority in Northern Ireland. A brief description of the initial deployment and the soldiers is included with an examination of two social aspects relating to their arrival. First, I review the Northern Irish community's reception of the soldiers and explain why the goodwill between them and the army was short-lived. Second, I examine why "No-Go" areas (entire sections of Londonderry and Belfast that were unofficially off limits to civil and military authorities) were permitted to exist.

I will then proceed to explore some legal aspects of the deployment that affected the British soldier, what equipment was available, and what changes were made to meet mission requirements. Clearly, there are many additional political, social, and legal issues worthy of discussion. My focus in this chapter is on those issues that relate most directly to the domestic deployment of the armed forces.

### The Political Environment

Again, it is history that influences to a great degree the events of Northern Ireland in the 1960s. Calling oneself "Catholic" or "Protestant" goes much deeper than mere religious beliefs; it typifies the divide within the population of Northern Ireland. Protestant domination of local and state government since the early 1920s sustained and even encouraged the sectarian separation of fellow countrymen and women. It was only in the latter half of the 1960s that pressure on Stormont for political and social change proved too great to ignore. The dam of discontentment finally broke in August 1969 and flooded Northern Ireland with the blood of Catholics and Protestants alike.

Almost since the inception of partition, Northern Irish Catholics had vented their complaints of unfair treatment in Stormont, but these concerns fell mostly on deaf ears. The emergence of the civil rights movement in the 1960s acted as a force for organization and a guide to action for the (primarily Catholic) disadvantaged (Wallace, 1982, p. 28). This movement garnered support from students, Catholic and Nationalist groups, and even liberal Protestants. The initial focus was on fair treatment in employment, housing and local government franchise. However, Catholic agitation



and demands for change inspired resentment and insecurity in the Protestant community, whose members worried about losing their rights to "popery." The founding of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) in 1967 clarified and publicized reform demands. It was against this backdrop of increasing social tension that the Northern Irish political "powers-that-be" attempted to find a workable solution to the growing turmoil.

The weight of these social and political pressures fell squarely on the shoulders of Captain Terence O'Neill, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland (1963-1969). The old saying that "a repressive government is at its weakest when it tries to reform itself" summarizes in essence the reason for O'Neill's eventual fall from political grace. He realized that discrimination had to end if Ulster was to attract foreign capital to help rebuild the stagnating economic infrastructure. In November 1968, O'Neill initiated a five-point reform program that included: the allocation of housing based on a readily understood and published scheme; the restructuring of local government elections so they are in line with the franchise in the rest of the United Kingdom (to include abolishing the business vote); and a review of the Special Powers Act and its utilization (Wallace, 1992, p. 30).

O'Neill's efforts did not appeal to the civil rights movement, whose members didn't think his reform proposals went far enough. Nor were the Unionists impressed, since "the consequences of reform was the reduction of autonomy and power of local government which was an important power-base for elements of Unionism" (Cunningham, 1991, p. 18). O'Neill received little support from some within his own government, such as Home Affairs Minister William Craig, who said, in reference to a potential increase in Catholic voting rights, that "When you have a Roman Catholic majority you have a lesser standard of democracy" (Wallace, 1992, p. 31). By 1969, O'Neill had become increasingly isolated and ineffective. NICRA demonstrations continued and violent confrontation with the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and Protestant agitators increased. He resigned in April and was succeeded by James Chichester-Clark.

During his first three months as Prime Minister, Chichester-Clark witnessed an escalation in civil rights demonstrations and counter-demonstrations and a rise in belligerence toward civil authority, especially in Londonderry and Belfast. The August 12 Apprentice Boys' March, celebrating the raising of the siege of Londonderry in 1689, promised to be a magnet for further Catholic-Protestant confrontation. The annual August 12 marches had

traditionally been occasions for Northern Irish Protestants to reaffirm their supremacy, but in 1969 they "became infused with an anxious and belligerent determination to resist the civil rights challenge" (Bartlett & Jeffery, 1996, p. 450). As a precaution, the RUC sent over 700 men to Londonderry in an attempt to keep Protestant marchers and Catholic protestors separated in the Catholic "Bogside." Despite their precautions, the RUC quickly found themselves caught in the district crossfire of flying projectiles being hurled by the Protestant marchers and the Catholics.

More violence erupted the following day, including incursions by Protestants "gangs" into the Bogside. Events in Londonderry, broadcast worldwide by television and radio, attracted international attention. Jack Lynch, Prime Minister of the Irish Republic, condemned the RUC as essentially Protestant protectors, aiding in "innocent people being injured and even worse" (Babington, 1990, p. 168). Rioting carried on into the evening and the next day. Chichester-Clark became convinced the reason for disorder was "the conspiracy of forces seeking to overthrow a government democratically elected by a large majority." In fact, the "communal disturbances," as stated by the 1972 Scarman Tribunal (report on violence and civil disturbances in Northern Ireland in 1969) were due in large part to the

social, economic and political complexities of the long discriminatory situation and, once begun, could not be controlled. Simultaneous rioting in Belfast also escalated out of control. On August 14, eight people were killed and hundreds more wounded. In addition, some 170 houses were destroyed and property damage estimates approached 8 million British pounds (Dewar, 1987, p. 140).

It was clear to the RUC that they could no longer control the situation. On the morning of August 15, the Police Commissioner of Belfast requested military assistance to prevent further internecine rioting. The first British soldiers called to assist were from the garrison battalions already stationed in Northern Ireland, consisting of approximately 2,400 men, at Holywood, Ballykinlar, and in Omagh (Barzilay, 1973, p. 1). These soldiers were in Northern Ireland as a strategic defense force as opposed to a domestic internal security force. The British government has garrisoned soldiers in Ireland since 1689, primarily to discourage any enemy of the crown from considering Ireland as a staging ground for an attack on Britain. These garrisons were no different than those on the British mainland in that they served as a "home" for units not deployed overseas in time of war or otherwise (Hamill, 1985, p. 21). Most of the garrison battalions' personnel had

already been tasked with either guard duty at power and electric stations that had been targets of previous "terrorist" activity or assisting the RUC in Londonderry. Approval for the deployment of home-based troops to Belfast was given by the United Kingdom late on the afternoon of August 15. The British Parliament "committed the army to maintain order in the streets, prevent further riots, and to keep the peace" (Bell, 1987, p. 150).

#### The British Troops Arrive

The 3rd Battalion the Light Infantry (3LI), with approximately 500 soldiers, was the first home-based British army unit to deploy to Belfast. They arrived the evening of August 15 with very little intelligence regarding the situation, and they were unclear as to the role they would play in restoring order. Later that same evening, the Catholic enclave of Bombay street in Belfast was practically burned to the ground by free-roving Protestant mobs. Due to the absence of any coherent plan or effort at prior coordination with the RUC, the army's presence had little effect. August 15, 1969, is as close as Northern Ireland has come to open civil war. With the RUC exhausted, and the army's deployment still under way, members of the two communities battled one another unchecked by any form of civil authority (Eveleigh, 1978, p. 7). Just one month

later, the number of British soldiers in Northern Ireland had swelled from the garrison total of 2,400 to over 6,000. Although literally thousands of people were involved in the rioting, many others in the community hoped for an end to the violence.

The army's initial reception by the Catholic community in Belfast was like that accorded a savior (Dewar, 1987, p. 140). Soldiers were welcomed with offerings of tea and cake. With little else to pin their hopes on, many Northern Irish Catholics viewed the arrival of soldiers as their only defense against unchecked Protestant aggression. The violence through the end of August 1969 remained sectarian and not aimed at the army. Military planners assumed (wrongly) that the army would quickly be withdrawn once the rioting had been contained.

The British government recognized that the continued presence and use of the B-Specials only deepened Catholic distrust of civil authority. To most Protestants, however, the B-Specials represented their last line of defense (after the RUC) against Catholic aggression. In October it was announced by Northern Irish Prime Minister Chichester-Clark that the B-Specials were to be disbanded, raising howls of protest in the Protestant community (Dewar, 1985, p. 39). Belfast streets filled with angry crowds that pelted the

British soldiers with stones and rocks. More seriously, 22 soldiers were wounded during the rioting when an estimated 1,000 rounds were fired at them. The army responded by returning fire, killing two Protestant civilians.

Deteriorating relations with the Protestant community actually helped the army establish a better (if temporary) rapport with the Belfast Catholics.

The decision by Chichester-Clark to disband the B-Specials (heavily influenced by the British government) was made with little thought as to the potential fallout it might cause. With no auxiliary force (B-Specials), a worn down RUC, and the Ulster Defense Regiment not yet activated, the brunt of internal security operations fell on the army. This preference for "politically expedient" solutions impeded the army's ability to act consistently and effectively. However, the army's failure to prepare properly for deployment to Northern Ireland also hampered, at least initially, its effectiveness. As Desmond Hamill states, "There was no co-ordinated civil/military approach to deal with a problem which rose from basic political, economic, and social conditions" (1985, p. 21).

The sectarian geography of Belfast and Londonderry was completely unfamiliar to the soldiers and officers on the ground and had to be learned on the job. Trained to fight

an external foe, the British army in 1969 was better prepared to fight a war than to conduct internal security operations. Questions about its role in Northern Ireland quickly surfaced. Was the army acting in aid to civil authority or attempting to restore order as its officers saw fit? Was this a guerilla war? When could/should deadly force be used? These questions continuously plagued army operations.

### The Soldier

British soldiers sent to Northern Ireland were torn between the reality of a potentially hostile environment that might call for the use of deadly force and the knowledge that they were still operating within the United Kingdom. From the first moment of arrival, they were constantly shuttled from one crisis point to another. Even well-planned, large-scale military deployments are difficult, but the short reaction time thrust on British military planners exacerbated the situation. Basic logistical requirements - including adequate billeting, provisions, and even the establishment of a mail system - required monumental efforts and heavy expenditures. The army's authority, mission, and length of stay were all in continuous flux. Harry Tuzo, the GOC in 1971, realized before most of his peers that the army was "in it for the



long haul" and made taking care of basic accommodations a priority, well aware that his troops were "absolutely pigging it."

The initial "honeymoon" between soldiers and the Northern Irish Catholic community was short lived. In 1969, the journalist Mary Holland notes:

It would take just one drunk to take a swipe at a soldier for the streets to fill with menacing-looking troops on one side of the barricades and a jittery, angry crowd on the other. In Belfast they have to suffer abuse from people particularly eloquent in obscenity. They have been stoned and have had broken bottles thrown at them. A sympathetic NCO from Durham told me he had never known his men so edgy. He was anxious what their reaction would be if, say, a British soldier was shot by a sniper (Hamill, 1985, p. 25).

Combine these issues with the fact that numerous soldiers were extremely young (many under 21 years of age) and you have a recipe for trouble. The Officer Corps, trained to lead men in combat, found themselves in the unexpected position of wielding enormous influence and power in local and community affairs. The officers became the *de facto* civil authority and were expected to advise Northern Irish citizens on cleaning, fire precaution, maintenance of street lighting, legality of groups or clubs, and recreation for youths (Dewar, 1985, p. 111).

As the deployment dragged on from one month to another, it began to resemble a permanent rather than temporary

operation. Soldiers were frequently asked to conduct operations for which they were not trained nor equipped. By early 1972, rotations of active duty British army battalions into Northern Ireland (four months in duration, called "roulements") became the norm. But even when army units were "on the ground" and effectively operational, there were areas in Northern Ireland where they were not permitted to go. Incredibly, Britain's own armed forces were denied access to certain neighborhoods in Belfast and Londonderry - cities within their own country.

#### The "No-Go" areas

From the beginning of the "troubles," Catholics set up barricades along main streets and side streets as a protective measure against further incursion into their neighborhoods by Protestant agitators or the RUC (Finnegan, 1983, pp. 127-128). Fearing another attack like that on Bombay street, they were in no hurry to take down all of the barricades even after the arrival of the British military. Some of the barricades, however, did come down between August and December 1969, when relations with the army were still amicable (Dewar, 1985, pp. 37-40). Because they were effectively out of civil or military control, No-Go areas quickly became a sensitive and controversial subject for the army, the community, and political leaders. The

deterioration of army-Catholic relations in the spring and summer of 1970 stimulated the rebuilding of the barricades. Check points and roving guards at and around the barricades were established and conducted by paramilitary personnel (mostly members of the fast-growing IRA) within the Catholic communities.

Stormont constantly badgered the army to retake the No-Go areas. When asked if the army could accomplish this mission, the GOC, Sir Ian Freeland responded, "Yes I can. In three hours." But, he continued, it would require "Three hours to take over and about three years to get out again" (Hamill, 1985, p. 24). Freeland's statement was prophetic; the army was becoming engaged in events much more complex and long-term than mere rioting by hooligans. A joint political-military decision was made in 1970 that no immediate action was to be taken toward removal of the barricades or termination of the No-Go areas. Westminster feared further alienation of the Northern Irish Catholic community and negative international opinion. The army was, at the time, trying to maintain as low a profile as possible.

In Belfast, the army put up its own barricades, called the "peace line," between Protestant and Catholic communities (Barzilay, 1973, p. 6). In hindsight, the

continued existence of No-Go areas was a mistake because it allowed the IRA free reign and was also a symbol of failure for civil authority. Not until 1972 was the decision by William Whitelaw, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, made to move into the No-Go areas and reestablish civil control.

### Law and the Military

Incessant rioting posed the threat of injury to soldiers from projectiles hurled at them by whomever they happened to be facing. But as the troubles dragged on into 1970-1971, the sniping directed at soldiers dramatically increased. The civil disturbance in Northern Ireland was turning into a shooting war. To aid soldiers in understanding the appropriate use of deadly force, the army issued the "yellow card," which was essentially a list of "do's and do not's," referred to in the American army as the rules of engagement (ROE). The yellow card was a cumbersome (23 paragraphs) document of instructions that spelled out, in very general terms, when a soldier could or could not use deadly force.

Soldiers often found themselves in life or death situations that required them to make quick decisions. They were being asked to assess all the possible ramifications of any decision in a split second's time. Yet even if soldiers

followed lawful orders to shoot and met the criteria according the yellow card, a civil court could later find them guilty of exceeding guidelines under section 3 of the 1967 Criminal Law Act. This Act allows a person, military or civilian, to use reasonable force in prevention of crime (Hamill, 1985, p. 49). As Robin Eveleigh notes:

The doctrine of "reasonable force" gives the soldier no guidance as to what he should do, but by implication it anticipates that, whatever he does, he will be charged in court and if justified will be acquitted. No one wants to be charged with manslaughter or murder or even assault, and the military, having no idea of what would be considered "reasonable," tended to permit street disorder in order to avoid this possibility (1987, p. 78).

It was the lack of consensus about what constitutes "reasonable force" that rendered uncertain the legality of actions taken by soldiers.

The biggest problem for soldiers was the gap between constitutional theory and the actual practice of using the army for the suppression of civil disorder. In theory, when soldiers come into contact with the civil courts, they are seen as having the same status as any other citizen intervening to suppress civil disorder and the same common law right to do so (Hamill, 1985, pp. 96-97). In addition, a soldier's duty to obey a superior is good only as long as that duty does not conflict with his duty as a citizen, which overrides his military duty. In practice, however,

the army saw itself as the direct instrument of government and assumed that it had powers in the suppression of civil order for which there was no constitutional basis (Eveleigh, 1978, p. 3).

From their initial deployment, the soldiers received orders conflicting with their constitutional obligations and duty to uphold the law as citizens. For example, orders were given between August 1970 and July 1971 to allow the illegal No-Go areas to continue to exist. The 1973 funeral of assassinated UDA leader Tommy Herron is another example: 3,500 uniformed UDA members participated in a parade that was illegal under the Public Order Act (Northern Ireland) of 1951, but the army had orders not to interfere. There are many other examples of selective enforcement of the law that made the army's operational decision making process much more difficult (Eveleigh, 1978, p. 17).

This resort to "flexible law" resulted in civilians never knowing where they stood legally. An action deemed legal one day might be illegal the next. The same uncertainty effected soldiers. For example, soldiers doing house to house searches and random vehicle checks one week were told the next week that these types of operations were no longer allowed. When the British government entered into negotiations with the OIRA in 1970, the army was ordered to

take no action at IRA funerals, when IRA members fired armalite rifles over the graves of fallen comrades - despite the fact that those same weapons were being used to fire on British soldiers. The Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act, passed in July 1973, went a long way toward reducing some of these uncertainties. This Act gave a wider range of powers to the army, including the right to arrest without warrant and to detain individuals (for not more than four hours) suspected of "committing, having committed or being about to commit an offense" (Eveleigh, 1978, p. 81). But the army's exercise of these powers further increased the antagonism of both the Protestant and Catholic communities.

#### Equipment

Probably the biggest difference between the United Kingdom and its democratic counterparts, relating to the domestic use of the armed forces, was in the civil-military structure of internal security operations. Other nations had specially trained and equipped personnel to aid in the restoration of internal order should the police fail. For instance, the CRS in France, the Carabinieri in Italy, and the National Guard in the United States all had protective and crowd dispersing equipment such as water canons, rubber bullets, and individual protective shields and training in

using them. In Britain, there was no intermediate force between civil police and the military (Babington, 1990, p. 180). The B-Specials had acted as such a force in Northern Ireland, but they were disbanded three months after the British army's arrival.

In 1969, the British were considered to have one of the best-equipped armies in the world. They were, however, not equipped for peacekeeping and riot control operations. Personal gear (that worn or used by the individual soldier) issued by the army consisted of small wooden batons and protective shields that barely covered half the body, giving the soldier little or no protection against flying projectiles. Most of the soldiers were armed with the standard issue Self-Loading Rifle (SLR), which weighed almost ten pounds and was a hindrance to carry while conducting riot control operations. The SLR fired a high-velocity 7.62mm round effective to distances of 600 meters. It was a good weapon for high intensity conflict but less than ideal for crowd control purposes.

The British army did generate and field new equipment more compatible to a domestic peacekeeping mission. A newly developed clear plastic called "makrolon" was used to create a full-length, lightweight, and see-through body shield. The makrolon body shield had two advantages: it protected



the entire body of the soldier while also allowing him to see what was happening. Makrolon visors were also developed to fit on standard issue army headgear (Barzilay, 1973, p. 71). The visors were extremely valuable because they protected the neck and face, areas of the body most vulnerable to injury in "full-blown" riot situations.

The problem of increasingly common sniping attacks against the army through 1972 was met in part by the development and issue of state-of-the-art telescopic night sights used by the army's own snipers. This allowed the army to cover soldiers on patrol, day and night, and from long distances. Military experts agree that the best way to kill a sniper is with a sniper of your own. The superior sights utilized by British snipers gave them a distinct advantage over their adversaries.

In addition to protecting the soldier, a variety of other equipment was necessary to counteract civil disturbance, combat terrorist-type activity, and protect built-up areas and permanent installations. CS or "tear gas" was employed by the RUC prior to the army's involvement in peacekeeping operations. Although the army did incorporate the use of CS with improved delivery systems and more effective firing mechanisms, it was mostly phased out by 1973 due to its general ineffectiveness at clearing

crowds and complaints from the general public. For dispersing crowds, the SLR was too extreme and CS too ineffective. What the army wanted was something that could be used by an individual soldier in a crowd without causing grievous injury. The solution - actually an American creation that was being used in some Asian countries - was the rubber bullet (Barzilay, 1973, p. 74). The rubber bullet certainly was effective at crowd dispersal, but its use became one of the most controversial aspects of British military operations in Northern Ireland. The rubber (and later plastic) bullet was not very accurate, and in some cases it caused severe injury and even death.

Attacks on police stations, military barracks, and public buildings were a common occurrence. An addition to the IRA's growing arsenal in 1973 was the shoulder fired rocket propelled grenade launcher (RPG). To counteract the RPG, mesh wires were installed by the army or contractors over many buildings thought to be potential terrorist targets (Dewar, 1985, p. 93). The wire was effective at stopping RPGs in flight, causing early detonation or no detonation at all. In addition, sandbags were incorporated in the protection plans of many RUC stations, military barracks and civil administration buildings. Although crude and basic, sandbags helped to protect these buildings, and

those civil or military personnel working inside them, from RPGs and small arms fire.

Specially designed vehicles proved to be excellent aids in crowd control and dispersement. Water-canon vehicles, which fired powerful jets of water, were purchased from Germany and used by the British army with limited success. Dye was later added to the water to aid in identifying rioters. But the vehicle most effective at clearing the streets of demonstrators was a bulldozer equipped with a massive front shield approximately 12 feet high and of varying widths (Faligot, 1983, p. 143). This British invention, which they called the "paddy-pusher," could be driven slowly toward threatening crowds, pushing them back while also giving soldiers walking behind a good degree of protection.

Other equipment was developed when the army's internal security role extended beyond just riot control duties to counter-insurgency operations beginning in the late spring of 1970. Army checkpoints sprang up throughout Northern Ireland to aid in the search for illegal weapons and suspected "terrorists." Many checkpoints utilized some of the new equipment to improve their effectiveness. One such device, called the Caltrop, was a wire rope with prongs or spikes protruding in all directions which a soldier could

quickly lay across a road. Any car that tried to run across it had its tires slashed and rendered useless. The army also developed very sophisticated devices such as mobile X-Ray machines and gelignite or "gelly sniffer" machines. The X-Ray machines could scan entire vehicles without soldiers having to tear apart seats or look under hoods. Gelly sniffers could detect trace amounts of gelignite, a common ingredient used in the thousands of bombs detonated in Northern Ireland.

The army used standard issue vehicles for their own mobilization purposes, but many were specially equipped with reinforced metal screens on the windows and a thicker "skin" to protect them from high velocity small arms fire. The one-ton hummer armored vehicle (affectionately known as "the pig") was the most common form of transport for soldiers in Northern Ireland (Hamill, 1985). The pig served a variety of functions, including troop transport, mobile command post, and ambulance.

#### Summary

Between 1921 and 1969, the British government adopted a "hands off" policy toward Northern Ireland, preferring to let the Stormont government deal with its own political and social problems. Discontentment among the long-ignored and discriminated against Catholic minority and the growing

civil rights movement in the 1960s provoked bitter sectarian clashes beyond Stormont's ability to control. The unchecked rioting in the summer of 1969 led to the call for and dispatching of British soldiers to aid civil authorities in restoring order.

British troops arrived in mass in August and September, unclear as to their exact mission and what role they would play. The army soon found itself in situations that it was ill-trained and ill-equipped to handle. Like a "pig in the middle," British soldiers were caught between the long-standing Catholic and Protestant "tribal" disputes. Initially, lack of foresight and planning by the army hindered its ability to act effectively. It was also confronted with a plethora of legal issues concerning domestic use of the army in internal security operations. The Emergency Provisions Act (1973), however, clarified the army's legal and constitutional powers when acting in aid to civil authority. In addition, the army successfully reconfigured much of its equipment inventory and developed new equipment to meet its tactical needs.

## Chapter Four

### British Military Strategy

Before the British army could "keep" the peace in Northern Ireland, they first had to "make" the peace. After brief successes between August 1969 and May 1970 in reducing the sectarian violence, the rise of paramilitary activity (especially by the IRA) in July 1970 oriented British military operations toward a counter-insurgency campaign. In 1972, it also became apparent to British troops stationed in Northern Ireland that their mission was more permanent than temporary. Thrown into the unanticipated role of providing domestic internal security, the British army was forced to revamp, even reinvent tactics, training, and how they conducted operations.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, I address the evolution of British army tactics essential to meeting mission requirements; this includes riot control, patrolling, and intelligence gathering. Second, I examine some of the major military operations such as the Lower Falls Curfew (1970), Internment and Interrogation in Depth (1971), Bloody Sunday (1972), and Operation Motorman (1972) and their results. In addition, I briefly review other facets of the British army's internal security evolution such as the creation of the Ulster Defense Regiment (UDR),

improvements in train-up prior to deployment, and the army's relationship with the press. Finally, I describe the situation in Northern Ireland at the end of 1974 and assess what it meant for the British army.

### Riot Control

It was obvious to British army officers in August 1969 that their soldiers had arrived in Northern Ireland ill-prepared to complete their initial task of riot control. Armed with small shields, wooden batons, and with practically no training in riot control techniques (Barzilay, 1973, p. 69), the army embarked on a vigorous "on the job" training program. The first lesson learned was that law enforcement is not automatically achieved simply by deploying troops to the street. Rioters quickly realized the army's inability or unwillingness to act consistently; this left the soldier with no recourse but to simply suffer through the shower of bricks, bottles, and other assorted projectiles thrown at them.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the British military was quick to develop and field a variety of new equipment. One of the army's first priorities was the personal protection of its soldiers. It is essential that a soldier be properly equipped if he is to feel confident in carrying out his duties. New shields, helmets, visors, and

flak (protective) jackets all significantly aided in protecting soldiers from the flying debris common in riot situations.

Another priority was the development of crowd dispersal and riot control equipment. The rubber bullet was created so that the individual soldier, using a "baton" gun, could disperse a crowd or an individual without causing serious injury. In 1972, the rubber bullet was replaced by the plastic bullet, a somewhat more accurate and less volatile replacement of its predecessor. Literally thousands of these rounds were used with great effect between 1969 and 1974. There were cases, however, when these bullets did cause serious injury and even death. But under the circumstances, rubber and plastic bullets were certainly preferable to the use of the SLR or the Sterling machine gun, whose use would have undoubtedly caused many more injuries and a much higher death toll.

Vehicles, including the paddypusher and similar "spin-offs" were also used in street clearing operations. Not only could rioters or demonstrators be pushed back, but advancing soldiers were afforded additional protection. After 1972, the necessity of this type of equipment proved less critical as large scale rioting diminished, replaced by shooting or sniping.



A majority of the riots that occurred initially began as peaceful and legal demonstrations. But these demonstrations also attracted "hooligans" or gangs of (mostly) young men who wanted confrontation. British military planners realized the need to devise a way of separating and arresting rioters while allowing, to the greatest extent possible, peaceful demonstrators to continue. Teams of specially trained soldiers, known as "snatch squads," were utilized in conjunction with the standard riot control forces. Lightly equipped to allow themselves more speed, the snatch squads remained out of sight until "launched in a scoop-up operation to arrest as many hooligans as possible" (Hamill, 1985, p. 86). Each battalion had marksmen (snipers) who covered the snatch squads in case they encountered difficulty. Riot control equipment and tactics were continually refined because once army procedures became standard, rioters proved adept at countering them. Although the learning curve was steep, the British army became quite proficient at riot control by the end of 1972.

#### Patrolling

The art of patrolling is basic to any army. Patrolling in an urban environment, like Londonderry and Belfast, brings with it many special challenges. Highly built up

areas provide a variety of hiding places, sniper and lookout positions, escape routes, and other obstacles to be considered by the patrolling unit. The British army's two main purposes for patrolling in Northern Ireland were domination of the ground in order to deny the enemy freedom of movement and learning details of a particular area to aid in intelligence gathering (Dewar, 1985, p. 180). Prior to 1972, patrolling by the army was more reactive than preventative. Soldiers had not been properly trained to patrol in cities as an internal security force, whereby rules of engagement and equipment available are much more restrictive than urban patrolling in a high intensity war environment. In addition, their areas of operations (AO) were unfamiliar to them. Patrolling tactics improved in proportion to the time the army was "on the ground." Well organized and well executed patrols were essential to aiding the prevention of enemy preparation and/or planning of illegal operations.

The army learned through experience that its patrols were too large, making themselves easy to spot as well as difficult to maneuver. The army also learned that gunmen probably wouldn't shoot unless they were sure of an escape route. To increase cover of potential escape routes, the army went from patrolling in sections (approximately 8-10

men) to patrolling in 4-man "Brick" teams. Bricks would patrol simultaneously down parallel streets, each moving independently of the other while always maintaining contact via radio. This type of "saturation" patrolling allowed far greater mobility and flexibility as well as permitting a unit to cover a larger area. Most importantly, it kept any potential gunman from effectively knowing where all the patrols were, thereby putting his escape route at risk.

Soldiers became conscious of the absolute necessity of being diligent every moment on patrol. Michael Dewar describes what a patrol leader must do:

"He will be looking into every window and doorway, every street corner and hedgerow for a possible telltale sign of an ambush - something glinting in the sun, an open window, a curtain moving, something that could be considered as a signal by perhaps boys to a waiting gunman or bomber" (1985, p. 183).

Vigilance was so important because the soldiers, wearing their uniforms and walking down the middle of streets, were prime targets for snipers. Indeed, foot or "duck" patrols incurred a large portion of the British army casualties between 1969 and 1974.

By 1972, patrolling techniques had vastly improved due to the intimate familiarization with the AO's in Belfast, Londonderry, and even in the border areas between Eire and Northern Ireland. With the establishment of the 4½ month roulement tour, it was vital for the unit preparing to

rotate out of Northern Ireland to do an effective "hand-over" of their operations to the incoming unit. To ensure continuity, incoming units sent advance parties (usually those in leadership roles such as company commanders or platoon leaders) ahead of the main force. These advance parties would actually go out on patrol in order to get the feel of their future AO. In this way, inbound soldiers would "not have to start from scratch" upon arrival in Northern Ireland (Dewar, 1985, p. 181). Regular foot patrolling proved one of the best ways to gain intelligence so vital to counter-insurgency operations.

#### Ulster Defense Regiment

The dissolution of the Ulster Special Constabulary (B-Specials) in the fall of 1969 left a personnel void for conducting domestic internal security (Babington, 1990, p. 174). In December 1969, an Act of the British Parliament authorized the creation of the Ulster Defense Regiment (UDR). The basis of the UDR is similar to the National Guard in the United States. Predominantly part-time in nature, members of the UDR were required to train a certain (minimum) number of days per year, and all noncommissioned and commissioned officers attended British regular army training schools. The United Kingdom also has territorial armies, part time soldiers who would mobilize only in time

of war. But unlike the territorial armies, the UDR was a "force raised for internal security duties inside the province" (Military Publishing, 1992, p. 27). Nowhere else in the United Kingdom will you find military forces serving in the same internal security capacity. The UDR today is called the Royal Irish Regiment (RIR), having merged with the Royal Irish Rangers in 1992. The RIR has one battalion available for duty worldwide and seven battalions operating within Ulster (Campbell, 1993, pp. 6-7).

The UDR was controversial from the day it officially formed on April 1, 1970. Many Ulster Protestants were still deeply embittered about the disbanding of the B-Specials and viewed the UDR as a weak replacement. Catholics saw the UDR simply as "old wine in new bottles" since membership was overwhelmingly Protestant (Barzilay, 1973, p. 155). Despite the intentions of creating a non-sectarian defense force, the ranks of the UDR filled with many former B-Specials and very few Catholics. The Catholics who initially joined the UDR experienced internal pressure and discrimination from the Protestant majority. In addition, many Catholics could not justify joining a military force whose perceived purpose was the suppression of their own people. By 1972, the UDR, with its 6,000 full and part-time members, was an integral part of internal security operations serving under the

British army command structure.

The creation of the UDR provided many advantages to the British army. The significant manpower addition gave more latitude in planning and conducting operations. In addition, the UDR freed up British units to conduct required NATO missions in Europe and colonial missions in the Falklands, Gibraltar, and Hong Kong. Since UDR members were locally recruited, they had intimate knowledge of their battalion tactical area of responsibility (TAOR) and of the people who resided there. In August 1973, women were admitted and fully integrated into the UDR. Called "Greenfinches," they went on patrol alongside men with the capability to search women if the need arose. The Greenfinches also drove vehicles, served in intelligence cells, and filled a variety of administrative tasks for their units.

Utilization of the UDR did have its limitations. To avoid any negative propaganda or inciting of Catholics, the UDR was not used to patrol Catholic neighborhoods (unless under direct British army supervision), during riot situations, or for covert or plain clothes operations. The UDR did, however, prove extremely valuable in conducting border patrols, guarding key installations and Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) stations, and providing manpower for

large or special military operations.

#### Lower Falls Curfew

By the summer of 1970, the sharply defined sectarian borders of Belfast ghettos had allowed paramilitary units to organize and operate almost at will. Despite the rhetoric of being "in aid to civil authority," the rise of the IRA, the UVF, and vigilante organizations forced the army to shift from primarily riot control to counter-insurgency operations. In July 1970, British military intelligence received reports about a cache of arms in the Catholic Lower Falls area of Belfast. When British troops moved into the Lower Falls, they were confronted by angry crowds. The situation quickly escalated beyond the army's ability to control it. Rioting ensued that evening, resulting in five civilian deaths and scores of injuries.

Sir Ian Freeland, Northern Ireland GOC, unilaterally instituted a curfew on the Lower Falls without consulting Stormont. Many Unionists applauded this action, having long pressured Freeland and the military to take a harder line against (Catholic) agitators. What the military failed to recognize at the time was that the Lower Falls was dominated not by the PIRA, but by the less belligerent OIRA. The army's actions discredited the OIRA and left the door open for the PIRA to move in.

The army-initiated curfew achieved the short term objective of quelling the riots and restoring a semblance of order. In military terms, the curfew was a success, but "in political terms it was a disaster" (Hamill, 1985, p. 39) because it alienated Catholics and hardened resentment toward British authority. The Lower Falls curfew effectively transformed Catholic "acceptance" of the British military presence to outright hostility. IRA propaganda, which advertised British army brutality and repression, greatly aided its recruiting efforts. Large-scale civil disorder (rioting) was still a concern for the British army, but its first priority now became the defeat of terrorist organizations and their activities. Although Protestant paramilitaries posed a constant threat, they tended to lean toward the less risky business of attacking Ulster Catholics and not British soldiers or the RUC. It was the anti-British IRA who became the army's number one target.

#### Internment

Between July 1970 and August 1971, there was a significant rise in violent activity, especially by the PIRA. The first six months of 1971 witnessed over 300 bombings and the murder of 13 soldiers, 2 police officers, and sixteen civilians (Dewar, 1985, p. 51). Despite the British army's counter-insurgency "focus" on IRA activity,



its efforts at halting the violence were negligible. Catholic No-Go areas, free from civil or military authority, gave the IRA free reign in planning operations, recruiting, and exerting influence over the civilian population. As Robin Eveleigh states, "English law is based on the principle of self-policing by the community" (1978, p. 63), but No-Go areas allowed the IRA to influence people's willingness to cooperate through coercion and physical intimidation. The same was true for the paramilitary organizations in many of the Protestant communities. The political pressure was building at Westminster and Stormont to do something, anything, to show progress toward defeating terrorism.

Against the advice of practically all British military commanders, the political decision was made by Brian Faulkner, then Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, to use his authority under the Special Powers Act to intern suspected IRA terrorists or terrorist sympathizers. Faulkner's decision was not made in a vacuum; his recommendation to initiate internment was supported by Westminster. Political decisions taking precedence over army recommendations on military related matters was nothing new in the United Kingdom. The army is not under the same scrutiny or pressure from the public that politicians are, and soldiers naturally view operations from a mostly

military point of view. The British government, however, has to consider not only military strategy, but the political ramifications of its decisions as well.

The RUC supplied the list of suspects to the army, who still lacked a comprehensive IRA intelligence data base. Operation Demetrius or "internment" was launched in the early morning hours of August 10, 1971. Hundreds of suspects were arrested and interned. It was only hours after the start of Operation Demetrius that the army began to realize that the RUC list was woefully out of date, many of the suspects being very old (some in their late 70s) or even dead. The result was the detention of more than 400 mostly innocent civilians.

Internment proved a minor tactical success and a major political failure, having a galvanizing effect within the Catholic community. The rival PIRA and OIRA briefly set aside their differences in order to put up a united front against British military intervention. IRA recruitment increased, Catholic moderates were shunned, and the Protestant and Catholic communities became even more polarized. In the four months following internment, 30 soldiers, 11 policemen, and 73 civilians were killed (Kelly, 1982, p. 153). Army leaders like Brigadier Frank Kitson, commander of the British 39th Brigade in Belfast, summed up

the opinion of many within the army when he said internment "had been done in the wrong way, at the wrong time and for the wrong reasons." Political expediency more than anything else forced the military's hand in conducting internment operations, which amounted to a further escalation in IRA insurgency activity.

Political and military decision making can be compared to the game of chess; if you do not plan two or more moves ahead, your strategy will probably fail. The political decision to initiate internment is a good example of not looking ahead. While internment was effective in the short term by getting suspected "terrorists" off the streets, the British government failed to consider what other effects internment would have and how to deal with them. When a political decision simultaneously effects military activity, as internment did, both parties must "war game" potential outcomes of this decision and devise strategies ahead of time to deal with those outcomes.

#### Interrogation in Depth

Initially there were two goals of internment. The first was to arrest individuals suspected of terrorist or insurgent activity. The second goal was to glean as much information from the suspects about IRA membership as possible. Intelligence is essential if counter-insurgency

is to be effective. Although arresting suspects might keep them off the street, they are under no obligation to volunteer any additional information. In order to coerce this information from the interned, the RUC, trained by British army intelligence, used a form of interrogation called "interrogation in depth."

An unknown number of those interned were subjected to interrogation in depth techniques that included: posture on the wall (for long periods of time); hooding; white noise; sleep deprivation; and a diet of bread and water (Hamill, 1985, p. 66). Accusations that the British army was torturing the interned quickly circulated in the world press, giving the IRA valuable ammunition in the propaganda war. In November 1971, a British government inquiry headed by Sir Edward Compton stated that while some of the prisoners had suffered ill-treatment, they (members of the inquiry) did not consider it physical brutality.

Opinions within the military varied greatly on the effectiveness and morality of using interrogation in depth. Michael Dewar, a former battalion commander in Northern Ireland, believed that the methods used for interrogation were "inevitably frightening and psychologically disorienting" but that they did not constitute brutality. He further states that interrogation in depth was in reality

a "highly sophisticated and clinical" method of gaining vital information. Robin Evelegh, another former battalion commander in Northern Ireland, believes torture or even some milder form of interrogation should be rejected, saying:

"A subjective reason for rejecting torture is the damage which it causes to moral confidence of the Security Forces; to be effective, energetic and yet self-disciplined, policemen and soldiers in a counter-terrorist campaign need to feel morally correct. If they are acting wrongly, they inevitably begin to wonder why they are there at all. Another subjective reason is that once the slightest hint of torture has been permitted, there is no logical reason for stopping anywhere" (Evelegh, 1978, p. 138).

In addition, while brutality may result in the gaining of some intelligence, it gives a moral justification to the terrorists for their actions.

#### Training

The first three years of British army operations in Northern Ireland were primarily reactive in nature. In other words, a clearly stated and consistent objective eluded the military, which made operational planning difficult. The army simply reacted to the latest riot, bombing, shooting, or civil disturbance. What evolved was an easily understood aim "to return Northern Ireland to normality within the United Kingdom, by destroying all terrorist organizations and by protecting individuals of both sects" (Hamill, 1985, pp. 141-142). Although not new, these aims provided British soldiers with a sense of mission

and laid the foundation for their training.

By late 1972, the army understood that it would be in Northern Ireland for the foreseeable future and that therefore changes in training was necessary. Preparation now focused on readying soldiers and units to conduct internal security, with counter-insurgency operations a priority. A cadre of professional and experienced soldiers formed the Northern Ireland Training Advisory Teams or NITATs (Beevor, 1991, p. 260). The use of NITATs proved very successful and it became mandatory for all units scheduled for tours of duty in Northern Ireland to attend NITAT.

Educating the soldier on counter-insurgency operational basics was an immediate priority at NITAT. Emphasis was on getting soldiers to appreciate the true depth of feeling in both the Catholic and Protestant communities. Important to successful counter-insurgency operations is knowing your enemy, the community in which he lives, and being able to extract the intelligence necessary to defeat him. Once a soldier or unit understands some of the basic factors in the lives of insurgents, their actions become much easier to predict.

NITAT continued to evolve, adding live-fire exercises and putting soldiers and their units in simulated Northern

Ireland scenarios. A wide range of situations were covered including: riot control; reacting to sniper fire; reaction to bombings or bomb threats; and recognizing potential ambushes. For example, when reacting to sniper fire, standard army tactics directed soldiers to find cover immediately. The lesson learned in Northern Ireland, and taught at NITAT, was that when soldiers scramble for cover, they allow time for the gunmen to escape. Soldiers were therefor taught to move forward as quickly as possible in hopes of cutting off the gunman's escape route. This new tactic forced gunmen to reconsider whether or not they should fire at the soldiers and risk capture. The training stressed being proactive instead of defensive or reactive.

The military tasks in Northern Ireland required a significant amount of training that detracted from the British army's primary mission as part of the NATO defense structure. Although domestic internal security was a new mission for the army, it did "wonders for junior Noncommissioned Officer's (NCO) leadership ability in the British army" (Dewar, 1985, p. 178). On a daily basis, young NCOs and company commanders were given a tremendous amount of responsibility in both military and civil affairs. The expanded responsibility certainly enhanced and refined the leadership skills necessary for the more standard army

missions. But simulated training, no matter how realistic, cannot replicate a soldier's emotional or physical state of being or how he will react in a real world situation. Even so, NITAT's contributions in the preparation and training of soldiers going to Northern Ireland were certainly effective in exposing soldiers to many of the situations they might face, thereby reducing the risks of poor decision-making.

#### Bloody Sunday

Internment initiated a "get tough" approach by the army in dealing with the IRA. In December 1971, the British military still had difficulty separating Ulster Catholics from Provisionals, failing to make the distinction between the majority non-violent population and the minority insurgent population. The tougher measures included continued internment, widespread house searches, and more intensive surveillance of the population (Hamill, 1985, p. 77). The effects of this approach, referred to as the "repressive period," were increased recruitment for the IRA and further alienation of Catholics.

On August 9, 1971, Stormont indefinitely banned all marches as a way of reducing potential flashpoints of conflict. In December, NICRA announced a plan to hold a march at the end of January 1972 in Londonderry in defiance of the ban. Both Stormont and Lisburn (British military



headquarters in Northern Ireland) immediately formulated plans to deal with the march. Under pressure from Unionists to intercede, Stormont prepared to act forcefully. Although accounts vary, it appears the military was also inclined to take a tough approach should the march occur. As Hamill states, "At this stage there was a great deal of pressure from Stormont to take tough action against the hooligans. General Ford agreed with this policy" (1985, p. 87).

The military received intelligence on January 29 indicating the IRA's determination to produce a confrontation with civil authorities. To counter the marchers, the British military Commander of Land Forces (CLF), Major General Ford, imported the First Parachute Regiment (1 PARA) from Belfast. 1 PARA had been in Northern Ireland for 15 months and had a no-nonsense reputation (Dewar, 1985, p. 58). Chief Superintendent of Police for Northern Ireland, Frank Lagan, had a reputation among British army leaders for being "soft" on Catholics, and he disagreed with the army's intention of getting tough. Lagan realized that Londonderry, unlike Belfast, had a Catholic majority and that a "get tough" policy would not be well supported by most of the residents. Recommendations by Lagan on how to deal with the marchers were essentially brushed aside by the British military. This is not an

example of lack of intelligence - the British army knew what the situation in Londonderry was - but more an example of misusing (ignoring) intelligence. Of course, hindsight gives the advantage of seeing a situation separated from the social, political and military pressures faced by the decision makers at the time.

Accounts differ as to exactly what happened on the afternoon of January 30, 1972, but a few things are certain. Just as the army had predicted, hooligans (those people less interested in civil rights and more interested in inciting confrontation with civil authorities) began to "take over" the demonstration as many peaceful marchers retreated when confronted by the army. At approximately 4:30 p.m., the British Brigade Commander in Londonderry, with the blessing of Ford, ordered 1 PARA to move against the hooligans and proceed with arrest operations. What happened next depends on the source of information. The army claims that its troops were fired on and returned fire. The people of Londonderry and civil rights marchers claim the army opened fire unprovoked.

The result was 13 people dead, 7 of whom were under 19 years old, and another 13 injured. Known as "Bloody Sunday," this operation proved to be a complete disaster. While it is true that the months immediately following

"Bloody Sunday" evidenced little or no outward civil disobedience in Londonderry, the political and public relations fallout for Stormont and Westminster was huge.

The Irish Republic recalled its ambassador from London, while in Dublin huge crowds attacked and burned the British embassy. No-Go areas became further entrenched in Ulster as the Catholics continued to pull into themselves, convinced that the British army was simply the strong arm of Stormont. The IRA rededicated its efforts against the army by using "Bloody Sunday" as justification for retaliation (Barzilay, 1973, p. 31). The army, now in a full-scale counter-insurgency campaign against the IRA, looked over its shoulder at the potential for Protestant violence as well. Any political decision seen as unfavorable by Unionists could lead to further conflict.

#### Operation Motorman

"Bloody Sunday" renewed international pressure on Westminster to act decisively to restore order. On March 24, 1972, the British Conservative Government announced the suspension of authority of the Northern Irish Government. In its place, Direct Rule from Westminster was re-established (Rees, 1985, p. 16). An immediate effect of Direct Rule was a lower profile by the army, especially in Catholic areas. The British government hoped that a

combination of Stormont being prorogued and a lower military profile would ease tensions in the Catholic communities. These hopes proved illusory as the IRA bombing campaign reached new heights, with a total of 1853 confirmed bomb attacks in 1972 (Dewar, 1985, p. 232). No-Go areas became IRA strongholds and their activities remained unchallenged by the police or the army.

A turning point in British army operations came on July 21, 1972, when IRA bombs in Northern Ireland killed 9 and wounded more than 100 other civilians. The army blamed the No-Go areas, saying they allowed the IRA to plan and initiate such operations undisturbed. William Whitelaw, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, had refused up to this point to move against Catholic No-Go areas. Whitelaw wanted to maintain a low army profile and to keep the military out of Londonderry's Catholic "Bogside" and the Creggan Estates. Senior army leaders, however, convinced Whitelaw that the operation to reoccupy the No-Go areas must go forward.

The retaking of the No-Go areas, called Operation Motorman, was eventually supported by Whitelaw and approved by Westminster. Motorman included the utilization of 27 army Battalions (roughly 22,000 soldiers), making it the largest British military operation since Suez in the 1950s.

The aim of the operation was clear: the establishment of a continuous presence in all hard (No-Go) areas in order to dominate both IRA and Protestant extremists (Hamill, 1985, p. 115). Overwhelming force proved decisive, resulting in the retaking of all No-Go areas in Londonderry, Belfast, and rural IRA strongholds. The army also moved into Protestant dominated areas in order to regain the perception of being an impartial force. The death toll during this massive operation included only two Londonderry civilians, a far lower number than earlier military predictions. In just over 24 hours, Operation Motorman resulted in the No-Go areas ceasing to exist.

### Intelligence

Lieutenant-General Sir Frank King was assigned as GOC of Northern Ireland in early 1973. King stressed that intelligence gathering and dissemination, as discussed earlier, was vital to counter-insurgency operations. All phases of intelligence gathering, both covert and overt, were stepped up, especially in Belfast. The increased focus on intelligence gathering coincided with the reduction in regular army activity such as patrolling, check points, and house searches.

To aid in covert operations, the army utilized members of the elite British Special Air Service (SAS). The SAS had

probably been involved in some capacity in Northern Ireland since as early as 1970, although it was not officially recognized as serving until 1976. The SAS is an elite unit whose expertise is in counter-insurgency, intelligence gathering, infiltration, and counter-terrorism (Faligot, 1983, p. 43). It is inconceivable that the British government would wait until 1976 to utilize SAS expertise.

Under the supervision of SAS personnel, Military Reconnaissance Forces (MRF) were created. MRFs were involved in a variety of covert intelligence gathering and infiltration operations. MRFs gathered intelligence by using a variety of "covers" including posing as a laundry company and even a massage parlor. Emphasis, however, was on "deep" intelligence, or infiltrating the rank and file of the IRA and Protestant paramilitary organizations. MRFs were extremely effective because they forced paramilitary or terrorist organizations to spend inordinate amounts of time on their own internal security.

The army also began more detailed intelligence gathering via the use of computers and better data collection at the unit level. People suspected of having ties to terrorist organizations were subjected to continuous covert surveillance. The military established "hide positions" where 2-3 soldiers might stay for days at a time

in order to monitor individuals or areas of interest continuously. Again, the primary focus was the IRA. Developing deep intelligence, better data organization, and covert surveillance made IRA sponsored operations much more difficult to execute.

Permitting the army to operate in civilian clothing was also a very effective way to gather intelligence. Civilian clothes allowed soldiers to move more freely among the population or with demonstrators at rallies and marches. This enabled the army to operate without causing the inevitable negative reactions toward large numbers of uniformed soldiers. However, political considerations also had to be considered when active-duty soldiers wore civilian clothes. According to Eveleigh, "There seemed to be an illogical extension of the principle that soldiers in a war against an external enemy should be in uniform, into the situation of soldiers coping with internal terrorism" (1978, p. 31). While the intelligence gathered by plainclothes operations proved valuable, the political penalty in Britain was steep. Democracies tend to recoil at the idea of domestic military operations conducted by soldiers "disguised" in civilian clothes.

Ultimately, the best intelligence came from those people within the ranks of the IRA who, for reasons of

conscience or fear of imprisonment, would cooperate with the army. The British army refined its intelligence gathering techniques, even using IRA members as "plants" or moles. There were times when the army announced that an arrest was made by an informer even if this was not the case. "It was often done deliberately" according to one British intelligence officer, "to cause dissention in the ranks of the IRA" (Hamill, 1985, p. 136). By the end of 1973, the army had successfully refined its intelligence gathering techniques with covert operations playing a pivotal role.

#### Press Relations

An assumption in most democracies is that the press is (or should be) relatively free to report events to the public without due influence of censorship or government control. In any insurgency, rebels depend on propaganda to put their cause in the best possible light, and the IRA was no different. Part of the British-IRA "war" in Northern Ireland was the effort made by both parties to present themselves, both internally and internationally, as fighting a just cause.

Until 1972, army relations with the press were inconsistent and unrefined. The situation in Northern Ireland differed greatly from previous internal security missions in the colonial campaigns of the postwar period,



where the press was more easily convinced or even misled on military operations (Dewar, 1985, p. 60). An example is the army press statement after "Bloody Sunday" claiming that all those killed were wanted members of the IRA. Later retracted, this erroneous statement damaged government credibility. Regardless of what really happened on that fateful Sunday afternoon, the IRA won a huge propaganda victory. It is the IRA's version of indiscriminate killing by the army that is today generally accepted as true.

An effective public relations campaign by the government is important in supporting counter-insurgency operations. But when public opinion affects political and military decisions, it becomes almost impossible for the security forces to carry out their mission effectively. As Eveleigh states, "In my experience, this prediction (referring to public relations) over-rode all the other factors when a decision had to be made on how the security forces would act" (1978, p. 27). British political leaders failed to face the fact that their army was "at war" with the IRA even if they were not (Beevor, 1991, p. 477). The army improved press relations by realizing the importance of getting out its version of events quickly. In the case of television, this dissemination also had to be done succinctly, since a 20-second spot was probably the best

anyone could hope for. Officers and soldiers were taught what to say and what not to say when confronted by the media. By the end of 1973, the military had established a consistent and well-oiled public relations campaign.

#### The Situation in 1974

In early 1974, there appeared to be a flicker of light at the end of the tunnel for the British army. The peace initiative at Sunningdale combined with a reduction in terrorist activity to make a cessation of hostilities and ultimately troop withdrawal seem possible. The Ulster Workers Council (UWC) strike in May protesting the tenets of Sunningdale, however, shattered any hope of a peaceful reconciliation. This strike happened just as the IRA was moving its bombing campaign to the British mainland due to the stepped up pressure in Northern Ireland. The IRA set off a series of "pub bombs" in October and November, with the most serious of these attacks occurring in Birmingham, where 21 people died as a result (Kelly, 1982, p. 227).

Revulsion toward the attacks and renewed anti-Irish sentiment in England were widespread. The bombings led the British Parliament to pass the Prevention of Terrorism Act (November 27, 1974), an authoritarian and discriminatory piece of legislation that gave new repressive powers used throughout the United Kingdom by the army and police. This

Act effectively confirmed the army in its role as the leader in domestic internal security operations in Northern Ireland. Twenty-two years later, that has not changed.

According to the Royal Ulster Constabulary, by the end of 1974 there had been a sharp reduction (from 1972) in deaths and injuries from terrorism (Baldy, 1987, pp. 107-108). This reduction, however, cannot disguise the fact that hundreds of people (military and civilian) in 1974 were still falling victim to violence in Northern Ireland. The "peace" that the British army hoped to make proved illusive. The violence simply transitioned from large-scale demonstrations and rioting to insurgent and terrorist-type activity.

#### Summary

The British army clearly did not anticipate the depth of its future involvement in Northern Ireland when home-based troops were first deployed in August 1969. Riot control was the army's first order of business and soldiers arrived lacking both proper training and equipment. By 1972, the military had not only refined its training but had fielded a variety of new and specifically designed equipment. While the army honed its riot control skills, it also made the transition to counter-insurgency operations by mid-1970.

To combat insurgency or "terrorism," the British army started with the very basics, which included patrolling, intelligence gathering, and a comprehensive train-up prior to deployment. NITAT facilities were created specifically geared for operations in Northern Ireland. NITATs allowed the army to focus training on internal security. Intelligence gathering, both overt and covert, vastly improved with the aid of the SAS, MRFs, and the exploitation of deep intelligence assets. To fill the manpower void caused by the termination of the B-Specials, the locally recruited UDR was formed and proved extremely valuable in conducting a variety of missions. Deployment of the 6,000 strong UDR eased the burden on British regular army units.

The common denominator among the major army operations discussed, with the exception of Operation Motorman, was short-term military success and long-term political failure. Operations like the Lower Falls curfew and internment, instead of weakening the IRA, only served to increase its stature with Ulster Catholics who saw the British military more and more as Stormont's enforcers. Motorman demonstrated overwhelming strength with impartiality, making it the most successful British military operation of the period. But it was only the public outcry against recent terrorist attacks that made possible the political decision

to support Motorman. More often, conflicting military-political priorities made operations during this time difficult and ineffective.

### Conclusions

The decision to send home-based British soldiers to Northern Ireland and their continued presence was, and continues to be, a political decision. In the United Kingdom, no decision on the deployment of its armed forces is made unilaterally by military leaders. While recommendations on courses of action and opinions on the wisdom of deployment are certainly given by the military command structure, it is the British Prime Minister and the Parliament who ultimately decide.

There is little doubt among political and military historians that, given the option, Britain probably would not have deployed home-based troops if any other viable option had been available. The death and destruction in Northern Ireland between 1969 and 1974, due in part to the British military presence, is certainly regrettable. But what would the cost in lives and property have been had the army not deployed? This is a question that will forever be up for debate. It is my opinion that, under the circumstances in 1969, the British government had no choice but to deploy the army since civil authority in Northern Ireland had all but collapsed. It is the fact Westminster let the political, social, and economic situation in Northern Ireland deteriorate to the point of civil war that

made the decision to deploy the army moot.

There are many lessons that democracies, present and future, can learn from the British military internal security experiences in Northern Ireland from 1969 to 1974. The primary mission of the army in a democracy is to fight and win the nation's foreign wars. The army, however, must also prepare itself to conduct operations other than war should national interests, as determined by its civilian leadership, dictate. In August 1969, the British army found itself in just such an operation with the deployment of home-based troops to Northern Ireland in aid to civil authority.

Democratic societies expect certain rights and freedoms that include the right to protest perceived civil, legal, or political injustices. But society also expects that peace and order shall be maintained. As one British commander stated, "Democracy is like a raft, it never sinks but you've always got your feet wet" (Beevor, 1991, pg 47). It is critical that any domestic use of the army be balanced against these rights and freedoms. If the military is not constrained in its actions, the possibility exists for democracy to succumb to a less desirable form of government. It is fortunate that in Great Britain, the military understands its ultimate subordination to civilian rule.

The British army's 1969-1974 internal security operations in Northern Ireland encompassed a variety of missions that included peacemaking (riot control), peacekeeping, counter-insurgency, low visibility (covert) operations, and military civic action. No decision, however, on conducting any of these missions was made without prior political consideration. From the initiation of any domestic employment of the army, it is essential that the military and its political leadership work as a team. Political and military leaders must not be forced into poor decisions by "international and domestic pressures to resolve problems and impose agreements even when disputing parties have not fundamentally agreed to resolve their differences" (Kennedy, 1996, p. 10-11).

By the time the army has been deployed in the domestic internal security role, it must already be assumed that the civil administration (national and municipal) and the police have failed. In order successfully to confront this societal breakdown, I believe several questions must be addressed. The first question that should be asked is what failed? Rioting, shooting, and disregard for civil authority are all symptoms. The cause of these symptoms, be they social, economic, or political, must be addressed. Simply deploying the army, as the British did in 1969, will



not solve societal ills beyond the army's ability to heal.

The second question that needs to be asked is what is the hoped-for end state and what is the army's role in getting there? The army alone will not, in fact cannot, resolve long-standing social, economic and political problems. Military forces must be used in conjunction with political, economic, and social initiatives, which hopefully can be agreed to by all involved parties. A clearly defined objective or series of goals must be understood, giving focus and a sense of mission to both army and civic leaders. Furthermore, the law must be absolutely clear in spelling out what the army is and is not allowed to do while performing its duties.

The third question that should be asked is who is the threat? By the summer of 1970, the IRA had emerged as the British army's number one enemy, but army leaders failed to recognize the fundamental differences between the PIRA and OIRA. Although the British army was weary of Unionist and Loyalist extremists, Protestant paramilitaries were considered less of a threat since they busied themselves mostly with killing Catholics and not soldiers. This was little comfort to the hundreds of Catholic citizens of Northern Ireland who fell victim to sectarian attacks. The historical antagonisms between Catholics and Protestants

were certainly known to the army but little understood. If an army is to be effective domestically, the threat that it faces must be understood in all its complexities.

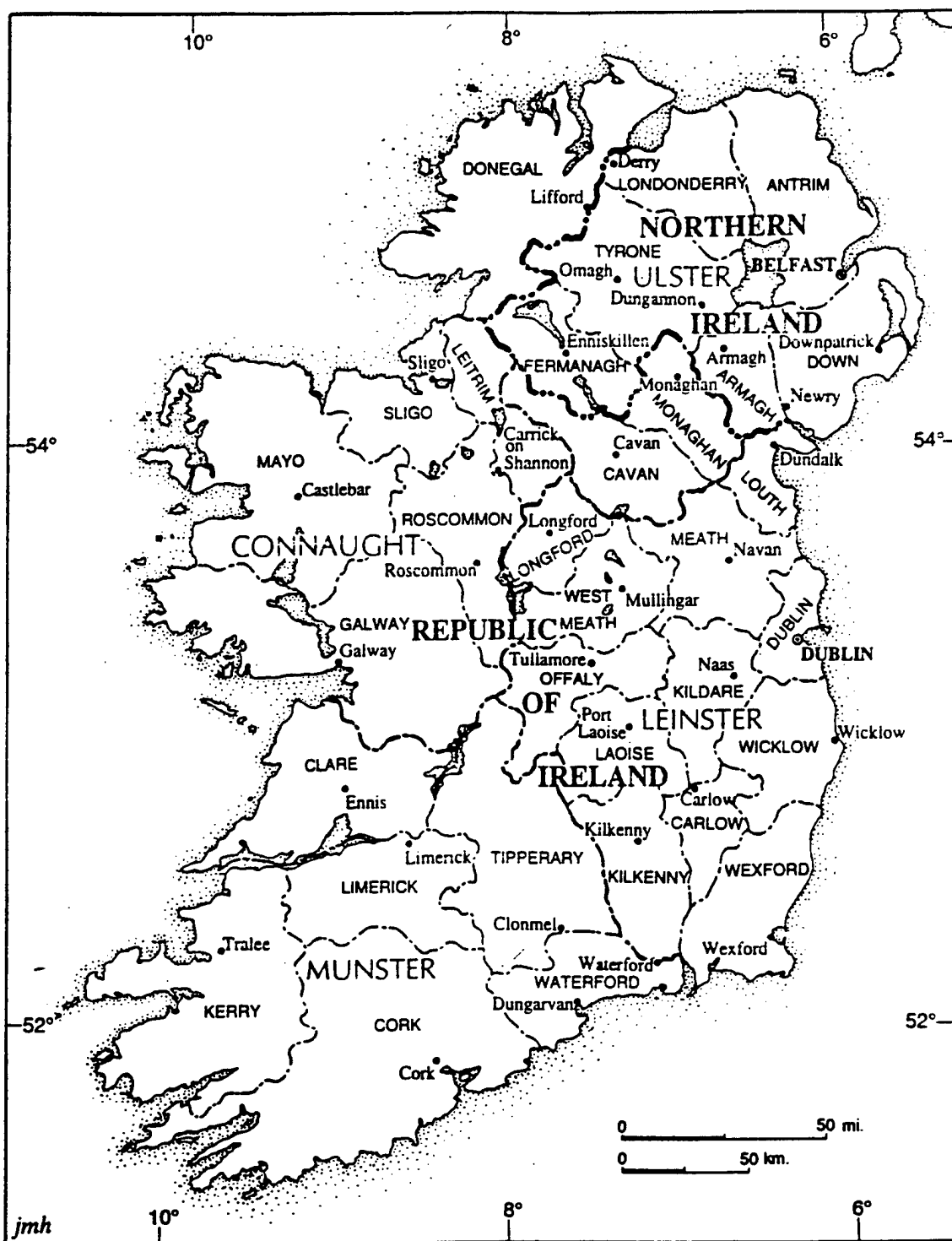
The fourth question to be asked is what tactics will the army employ? By its very nature, the army is an aggressive fighting force, instilled with a "warrior spirit" essential in combat (Strube, 1997, p. 10). Internal security, however, requires a variety of tasks not normally associated with standard military operations. These tasks might include organization of local youth groups, dispensing of food and medicine, coordinating and constructing building and street repair, and liaison between local communities. Elite units like the SAS, which are specially trained in counter-insurgency or anti-terrorist operations, can certainly aid military operations. Use of these types of (elite) units internally, however, must be carefully considered, since their employment will certainly (and rightfully) arouse concern in the general public.

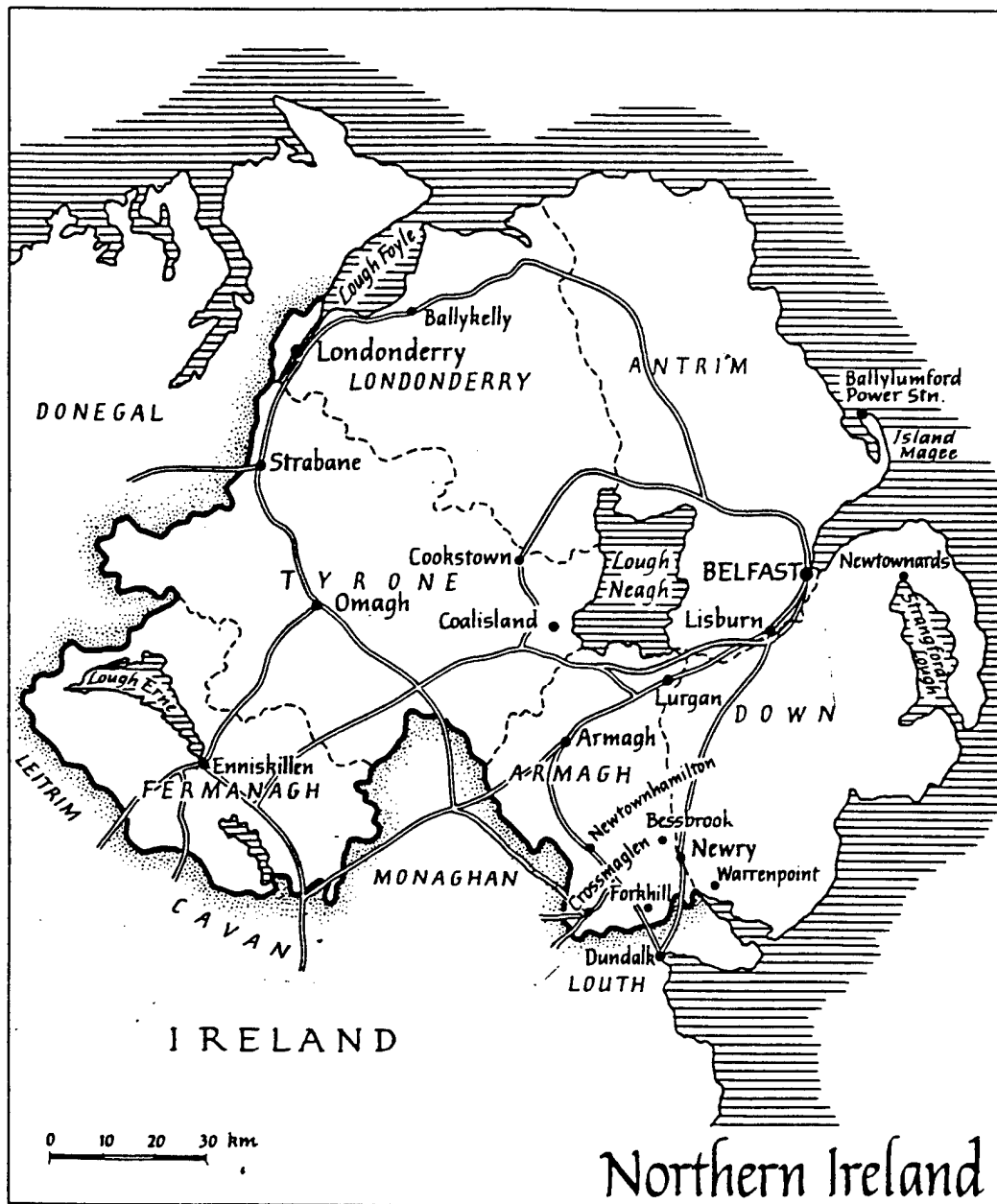
The army must also know from the outset who is ultimately in charge. Is it the police, the army, or someone else? In a democracy, ascendancy of the police in internal security matters is paramount. The Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) played "second fiddle" to the army prior to 1977, and it was only then that the police (RUC) began to

regain its proper role as leader in internal policing operations. The military and the police have distinct functions, with the former being to fight a nation's wars and the latter to keep the peace within the nation. It is important in a democracy to maintain this separation of power, otherwise the lines of democracy become blurred.

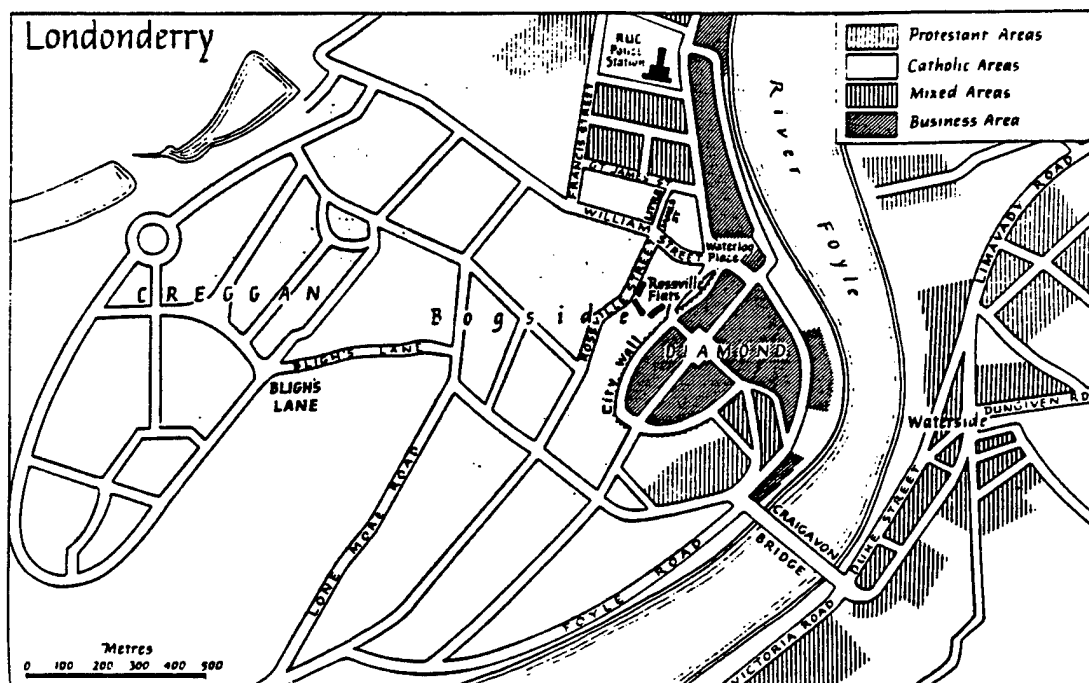
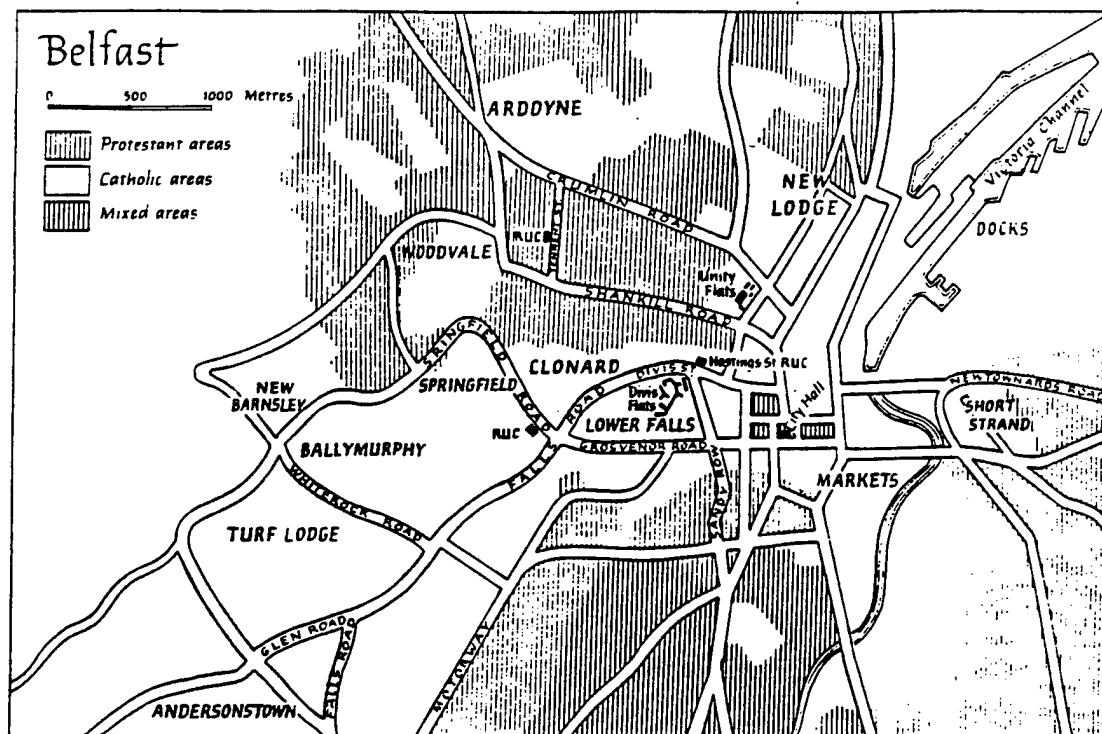
Finally, no democratic country should assume that it is immune to situations like that encountered by the British army in 1969. The United States' population in the year 2050 is projected to be 500 million persons, which could further strain the nation's ethnic and racial relations and its social fabric more generally (Tom Morganthau, 1997, p. 58). All democracies must recognize the potential, however remote, that their armies might be used as internal security forces. If the army is deployed in such a security role, its strategy must attempt to "keep the level of violence as low as possible in order that other influences can work" (Dewar, 1985, p. 224). Ultimately, in Northern Ireland and in any other democracy, the only permanent solution to long-term internal problems must be a political one.

## Appendix 1





## Appendix 2



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